CELEBRATED CRIMES

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

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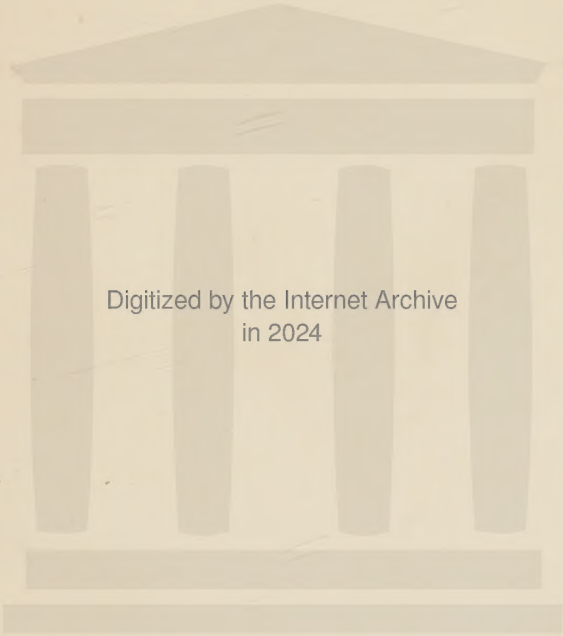

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CELEBRATED CRIMES

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

Illustrated

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CONTENTS.

	Page
Joan of Naples	3
Nisida	133
The Marquise de Brinvilliers	189
The Cenci	257

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

VOL. II.

	Page
Joan, Queen of Naples and Donna Cancia, *Frontispiece*	
Interior of the Church of Santa Chiara . .	51
General View of Naples	133
Island of Nisida	142
Death of Sainte-Croix	208
Portrait of Beatrice Cenci	264

JOAN OF NAPLES.

CELEBRATED CRIMES.

JOAN OF NAPLES.

1343–1382.

CHAPTER I.

On the night of the 15th or 16th of January, in the year 1343, the inhabitants of Naples were startled from their peaceful slumbers by the tolling of the bells in the three hundred churches of that splendid capital. In the general agitation caused by this unusual alarm, the first idea that entered the minds of the people was that the town was on fire, or that a hostile army had silently disembarked under cover of the night, and was about to put the citizens to the sword. But the doleful and intermittent sounds of the bells, which, breaking the silence of the night at regular intervals, invited the faithful to recite prayers for the dying, soon convinced them that no misfortune threatened the town, and that the king only was in danger.

In fact, for several days previously, the greatest anxiety had been observed to prevail within the Castel-Nuovo. The officers of the crown were regularly assem-

bled twice in the day; and the nobles of the kingdom who had the privilege of entrance to the royal apartments seemed oppressed with profound melancholy. Meanwhile, although the death of the king was looked on as inevitable, yet, when it became known that his last hour was approaching, the whole town was affected with the deepest grief; which will be the more readily understood when we explain that he whose death was now so near after a reign of thirty-three years, eight months, and a few days, was Robert of Anjou, the most just, wise, and glorious king that ever occupied the throne of Sicily. Truly did he bear with him to the grave the regret and the praises of all his subjects. The soldiers spoke with enthusiasm of the long wars which he had maintained against Frederic and Peter of Aragon, Henry VII., and Louis of Bavaria, and felt their hearts glow within them at the recollections of the brilliant campaigns of Lombardy and Tuscany; the priests extolled him, in gratitude for his having invariably defended the Popes from the attacks of the Ghibellines, and for his having founded convents, hospitals, and churches, in all parts of the kingdom; the men of letters looked upon him as the most accomplished king in Christendom, — so much so, indeed, that Petrarch would accept from no other hands than his the poet's crown, and for three successive days answered the questions which Robert deigned to propound to him, upon every branch of human knowledge; the jurists, amazed at the wisdom of the laws by which he had enriched the Neapolitan code, had surnamed him the Solomon of the middle ages; the nobles applauded him for the respect he paid to their privileges: and he had gained the hearts of the people by his clemency, his piety, and his mildness.

Now, priests and soldiers, men of letters and poets, nobles and commoners, were looking forward with terror to the government falling into the hands of a stranger and a young girl, and called to mind the words of Robert himself when following to the grave the body of Charles, his only son. At the moment when he passed the threshold of the church, he turned toward the barons of the kingdom, and cried, in a voice stifled by his sobs, "This day the crown is fallen from my head: woe to me! woe to you!" And now that the bells were announcing the dying agonies of the good king, these prophetic words occurred to the minds of every one.

The women prayed fervently to God, and the men hastened from all parts of the town toward the royal residence, in order to hear the latest and best authenticated intelligence; but after some minutes of expectation, which they employed in communicating to each other their melancholy thoughts, they were compelled to return as they came, as nothing passing within was allowed to transpire. The drawbridge was raised as usual, and the guards were at their posts.

Nevertheless, if our readers have a wish to be present at the last agonies of the descendant of Saint Louis and the grandson of Charles of Anjou, we can introduce them into the chamber occupied by the dying monarch. An alabaster lamp, suspended from the ceiling, lighted a spacious and gloomy room, the walls of which were hung with black velvet, embroidered with golden *fleurs-de-lis*. By the wall facing the two doors, which were at this time closed, stood, under a brocade canopy, an ebony bedstead supported by four columns, wrought and sculptured with symbolical figures. The king, after having struggled with the most violent convulsions, had fallen back exhausted into the arms of his confessor

and physician, both of whom, holding a hand of the dying man, were feeling his pulse with great anxiety, and exchanging significant glances. At the foot of the bed sat a woman about fifty years of age, with clasped hands, and eyes raised to heaven in the attitude of grief and resignation; this woman was the queen. Her face had that appearance of patient suffering which indicates a mind tried by adversity and subdued by religion.

At the expiration of an hour, during which time no movement occurred to disturb the profound silence which reigned round the bed of death, the king sighed feebly, opened his eyes, and made a faint effort to raise his head. He begged the queen to draw near, and said in a broken voice that he wished to converse with her a short time without witnesses. The physician and the priest retired, and the king followed them with his eyes till they disappeared, then passing his hand across his brow as if to collect his thoughts, and making an effort to gather his strength, he spoke thus: —

"What I have to say to you, madame, has no connexion with the two grave personages who were just now here, for their duty is fulfilled. The one has done for my body all that human skill could suggest, with no other result than that of prolonging my agonies; the other has promised me the divine remission of my sins, without having the power to remove the gloomy apparitions which rise before me at this dreadful hour. You have twice seen me struggling under a supernatural pressure. My forehead is bathed with sweat, my limbs are stiffened, my cries have been stifled by an iron hand. Is it the evil spirit whom God allows to torment me, or is it but remorse, taking the form of a phantom? Already I feel that the two combats I have undergone have so weakened my strength that I cannot bear up

against a third. Listen to me then, my Sancia, while I give you some directions on which perhaps will depend the repose of my soul."

"My liege and master," said the queen, in a tone of the calmest submission, "I am ready to receive your commands, and if God, in his inscrutable designs, has ordained that you shall be called to his glory, and that we shall be left to mourn for you, your last earthly wishes shall be executed with the most scrupulous exactness; but permit me first to sprinkle some drops of holy water to drive away the curse from the room, and to read you a passage from the prayer you composed, in honour of your holy brother, to implore his protection at a moment when it is indispensable to us."

And, opening a richly bound volume, she recited with fervent devotion some verses of the prayer, written in elegant Latin by Robert, for the use of his brother Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, — a prayer which continued to be employed in the Church to the period of the Council of Trent.

Soothed by the beauty of his own composition, the king had nearly forgotten the object of the conversation which he had demanded with so much solemnity. He murmured softly: —

"Oh, yes! you are in the right; pray for me, madame, for you are indeed a saint, while I am but a wretched sinner."

"Do not say so, my liege," interrupted Donna Sancia; "are you not the greatest, the wisest, and the most virtuous king who has ever sat upon the throne of Naples?"

"But that throne is usurped," replied Robert, gloomily. "You know it properly belongs to Charles Martel, my eldest brother; and as Charles, by right of his mother, has inherited the throne of Hungary, the kingdom of Naples descends to his eldest son Carobert, and

not to me, who am but the third in succession. I have permitted myself to be crowned in place of my nephew, who is the lawful king; I have substituted the younger for the elder branch of the family; for thirty-three years I have stifled the reproaches of my conscience. True, I have gained battles, made laws, and founded churches; but there is one word which gives the lie to all the pompous titles which the admiration of the people attach to my name, and that word sinks far deeper in my soul than all the flatteries of my courtiers, the lays of the poets, or the shouts of the multitude: it is — that I am a usurper."

"Do not slander yourself, my liege; remember that if you have not abdicated in favour of the lawful heir, it was because you wished to save the people from the greatest misfortunes. Besides which," continued the queen, "you have retained the government of the kingdom with the assent and authority of our holy father, the sovereign pontiff, who disposes of it as a fief belonging to the Church."

"I have satisfied my conscience with these reasons for a long time," replied the dying man, "and the authority of the Pope has silenced my scruples; but whatever security we may affect during life, there must come a solemn and terrible hour when all such illusions vanish; for me, this hour is come, and I must shortly appear before that God who is the only infallible judge."

"If his justice is infallible," the queen replied, "is not his mercy infinite? Even supposing your terrors to be founded in truth, what sin would not be forgiven upon so sincere a repentance? And have you not repaired the injury which you may have done to your nephew Carobert by summoning Andrea his younger son into the kingdom, and by marrying him to Joan, the

eldest daughter of your unfortunate Charles? Will they not then be the heirs of your crown?"

"Alas!" cried Robert, with a deep sigh, "God will perhaps punish me for having too late remembered this just reparation. Oh, my good and noble Sancia, you have touched a chord which vibrates sadly in my soul, and you yourself have led me to the subject of which I was about to speak. I have a dark presentiment (and the presentiments of the dying are generally prophetic), — I say, I have a presentiment that the two sons of my nephew Louis, who, since the death of his father, is King of Hungary, and Andrea, whom I have wished to place upon the throne of Naples, will be the destroyers of my family. From the first day he set foot in our palace, a strange fatality has opposed all my intentions. I had hoped that Joan and Andrea being brought up together, a tender intimacy would spring up between these two children, and that the beauty of our climate, our polished manners, and the elegant splendour of our court, would eventually soften down all the remaining rudeness in the character of the young Hungarian; but in spite of my efforts, everything appears to have contributed to inspire the pair with aversion and coldness to each other.

"Joan, hardly fifteen years old, is already gifted far beyond her age. Endowed with a brilliant and active mind, a noble and elevated character, an ardent and lively imagination, she is, at times, as free and playful as an infant, and, at others, as dignified and haughty as a queen; now as confiding and sprightly as a girl, and again as impassioned as a woman, — offering the most striking contrast to Andrea, who, after having resided ten years in our court, is more rude, sullen, and intractable than ever. His cold and regular features, his inexpressive face, and his repugnance for all the pleasures

which his wife most enjoys have raised between Joan and him a barrier of indifference and antipathy. To the kindest expressions, he answers by a dry word, a disdainful smile, or a frowning brow; and he never seems so happy as when, under pretext of hunting, he is enabled to leave the precincts of the court. Such, madame, are the young couple upon whose heads my crown is about to descend, and who, in a few hours, will find themselves exposed to all the storms which now lurk beneath a deceitful calm, and which await only my last sigh to burst forth upon their heads."

"My God! my God!" cried the queen, greatly agitated.

"Listen to me, Sancia; I know that your heart has ever been detached from earthly vanities, and that you await the hour when God shall summon me away, to retire into the convent of Santa Maria della Croce, of which you yourself are the founder, in the hope of there ending your days. Think not that at this moment, when, convinced of the nothingness of human grandeur, I am about to sink into the tomb, I shall endeavour to dissuade you from your holy resolution. Grant me only, before being wedded to our Lord, one year of widowhood, during which time you will keep a watchful eye upon Joan and her husband, and avert the dangers with which they are threatened. Be on your guard against all the intrigues and temptations which will surround the young queen; and, above all, beware of the affection of Bertrand of Artois, the beauty of Louis of Tarento, and the ambition of Charles of Duras."

The king paused, exhausted by the effort which he had made in pronouncing these words; then, turning a supplicating look to his wife, and holding her attenuated hand in his, he proceeded in an almost inaudible voice:

"Once more, I implore you not to quit the court for the space of one year. Do you promise me this, madame?"

"My liege, I promise."

"And now," continued Robert, whose face brightened up at these words, "recall my confessor and my physician, and assemble the family; for the hour approaches, and I feel that I shall not much longer have the power of uttering my last words."

In a few moments the priest and the physician re-entered the room. The king thanked them earnestly for the attentions they had paid him in his last sickness, and begged that they would assist in clothing him in the coarse garb of the Franciscan monks, "that God," said he, "beholding me expire in poverty, humility, and penitence, may the more readily grant me pardon for my sins."

Accordingly, they fastened upon his naked feet the sandals of the mendicant friars, clothed him in the frock of St. Francis, and tied the cord round his body. Thus, stretched upon his bed, with his thin white hairs, his long beard, and his hands crossed upon his breast, the King of Naples resembled one of those venerable anchorites whose lives are passed in macerations of their flesh; and whose souls, absorbed in the contemplation of celestial objects, insensibly pass out of the last struggle with death into eternal bliss. He remained in this attitude for some time, with closed eyes, in silent prayer to God: then, having ordered the spacious room in which he lay to be lighted up, as on grand solemnities, he made a sign to the two persons present, one of whom placed himself at the head, and the other at the foot of the bed. At the same instant the folding-doors were thrown open, and the whole of the royal family, preceded by the queen,

and followed by the principal nobility of the kingdom, entered the room, and, silently ranging themselves around the bed, awaited the last words of the expiring monarch.

The king's eyes were fixed upon Joan, who had placed herself upon his right hand, with an indescribable expression of affection and sadness. She was of such rare and perfect beauty that her grandfather looked on her as on an angel whom God had sent to console him in his last agonies. Her beautifully marked features, her large and humid black eyes, her pure and open forehead, her hair as glossy as the raven's wing, her delicate mouth and noble form, made altogether such a creation of loveliness as left upon the hearts of those who looked upon her a profound impression of calm and melancholy. Tall and slender, her movements were full of lightness and activity, giving to her shape the graceful undulation of the stalk of a flower waving in the breeze. But, notwithstanding all these fascinating graces, there might already be observed in the heiress of Robert a character of firmness and decision; and the dark circles which surrounded her beautiful eyes proved that her soul was already governed by precocious passions.

Next to Joan stood her young sister Maria, a girl twelve or thirteen years of age, also the daughter of Charles, Duke of Calabria, who had died before she was born, and of Marie de Valois, who had the grief of leaving her in the cradle. Embarrassed by this august assemblage, she advanced timidly by the side of the grand seneschal's widow Filippa, surnamed the Catanian, who was the governess of the princesses, and respected by them as a mother. Behind these princesses, and by the side of Filippa, stood Robert of Cabane, a noble-looking young man, standing with an air of haughty

carelessness, and stealthily glancing at Joan looks of audacious freedom. The group was completed by Donna Cancia, the young lady-in-waiting of the princesses, and by the Count of Terlizzi, who exchanged with this lady sometimes a furtive look, and at others a slight smile.

The second group was composed of Andrea, the husband of Joan, and his preceptor, a friar, who had followed him from Buda, and never quitted him for an instant. Andrea was at this time about eighteen years old. At first there was something striking in his regular features and fair hair; but, amongst those animated Italian countenances, his face was wanting in expression, his eyes seemed heavy, and there was something harsh and cold in his whole appearance which betrayed his savage nature and foreign origin. As to Robert, his preceptor Petrarch has handed down his portrait to posterity: florid in complexion, with red hair and beard; short and deformed in stature; haughty in manner, though squalid and filthy; and, like a second Diogenes, scarcely covering his hideous and deformed limbs with his frock.

In the third group was the widow of Philip, Prince of Tarento, the king's brother, honoured at the court of Naples by the title of Empress of Constantinople, a title which she inherited as granddaughter of Baldwin II. Any one accustomed to fathom the depths of the human soul would have seen, at a glance, hatred, envy, and ambition lurking in this woman's pale and livid face. She was surrounded by her three sons, Robert, Philip, and Louis, the youngest of the three. If the king had wished to select as the successor to his crown the handsomest, the most generous, and the bravest of his nephews, there is no doubt that Louis of Tarento would have obtained the preference. At the age of three and

twenty he excelled the most renowned knights in the exercises of arms; frank, truthful, and valiant, he no sooner conceived a design than its execution became certain. His countenance beamed with intellectual light, while his soft and gentle manners were irresistibly attractive. A favoured child of Fortune, he had but to wish, and it seemed as if some unknown power — some kind spirit that had presided at his birth — smoothed every difficulty and gratified every desire.

Nearly at his side, in the fourth group, stood his frowning cousin, Charles of Duras. His mother, Agnes, the widow of John, Duke of Duras and Albany, another of the king's brothers, gazed at him with terror, and with an instinctive movement clasped to her bosom her two younger sons, Robert, Prince of Morea, and Ludovico, Count of Gravina. Charles, with a pale visage, short hair, and thick beard, alternately cast his suspicious glances upon his dying uncle, upon Joan and the little Maria, and upon his cousins, and appeared disturbed to such a degree that he could not remain quiet for a moment. His restless and agitated manner contrasted strangely with the calm and thoughtful countenance of Bertrand of Artois, who, giving place to his father, drew near the queen, who was placed at the foot of the bed, and thus stood opposite to the Princess Joan. The young man was so entirely absorbed by her beauty that he seemed to observe nothing else in the room.

As soon as Joan and Andrea, the Princes of Tarento and Duras, the Counts of Artois, and Queen Sancia, had taken their places round the death-bed in a semicircle, and in the order which we have described, the vice-chancellor of the kingdom passed through the crowd of barons, who, according to their rank, were standing behind the princes of the blood; and, after making his

obeisance to the king, produced a parchment, sealed with the royal arms, and in the midst of profound silence began, in a solemn tone, to read the will of the king:

"Robert, by the grace of God, King of Sicily and of Jerusalem, etc., declares, as his successor to the kingdom of Sicily, and all his other territories, Joan, Duchess of Calabria, eldest daughter of the excellent Duke Charles of Calabria, of illustrious memory. And he moreover names and declares Maria, youngest daughter of the deceased Duke of Calabria, his heiress in the county of Alba, and in the jurisdiction of the valley of Grati, and the territory of Giordano, with all the dependencies thereto appertaining; and ordains that the aforesaid Maria shall receive them, in direct fief, from the above-mentioned Duchess of Calabria and her heirs; but with this condition, that if the said Duchess of Calabria shall give and allow to her illustrious sister, in consideration of the above reasons, the sum of ten thousand ounces of gold, as indemnification, the above-mentioned county and jurisdiction shall remain in the possession of the said duchess and her heirs for ever.

"And he moreover wills and ordains, for private reasons, upon which he acts, that the above-mentioned Maria shall contract marriage with the very illustrious Prince Louis, the reigning King of Hungary. And if any obstacle arise to these nuptials from the treaty of marriage which is said to be signed and concluded between the King of Hungary and the King of Bohemia and his daughter, our lord the king directs that the illustrious Princess Maria shall, in that case, contract marriage with the eldest son of the high and mighty Prince Jean, Duc de Normandie, eldest son of the reigning King of France."

At this passage Charles of Duras cast a significant glance upon Maria, unobserved by those present, whose attention was engrossed by the reading of the will. As to the young lady herself, from the time that her name had been first mentioned, her cheeks were glowing like

crimson, and, ashamed and embarrassed, she dared not raise her eyes from the ground.

The vice-chancellor continued: —

"And he moreover wills and ordains that the counties of Forcalquier and Provence should be perpetually united to his kingdom under one government, and forming one inseparable domain; even although there should be several sons or daughters, or any other obstacle whatever; this union being of the greatest interest to the mutual safety and prosperity of the kingdom and the above-mentioned counties.

"And moreover he has decided and ordained that, in case of the death — which God forbid! — of the Duchess Joan, without leaving any legitimate offspring, the principality of Salerno, with the titles, profits, and all privileges appertaining thereto, shall descend to the most illustrious Andrea, Duke of Calabria, as well as the yearly revenue of two thousand ounces of gold, for his maintenance.

"And he has moreover decided and ordained that the queen principally, as well as the venerable father Don Filippo, Bishop of Cavaillon, vice-chancellor of the kingdom of Sicily, and the mighty lords, Philip of Sanguineto, seneschal of Provence, Godfrey of Marsan, Count of Squillace, admiral of the kingdom, and Charles of Artois, Count of Ané, shall be, and continue to be regents and administrators, of the above-mentioned Signor Andrea, and of the above-mentioned ladies, Joan and Maria, until they shall have attained the age of twenty-five years," etc.

When the vice-chancellor had concluded the reading of the will, the king raised himself into a sitting posture; and, after surveying in succession his fine and numerous family, he addressed them in the following words: —

"My children, you are here to listen to my last wishes. I have summoned you round my death-bed, that you may see how the glory of the world passes away. Those who are termed the great ones of the earth have important

duties to fulfil here, and a great account to render hereafter: it is in this that their greatness consists. I have reigned thirty-three years, and God, before whom I must shortly appear — who during my long and painful career has often heard my sighs — alone can know the thoughts which distract my soul in these my latest moments. In a short time I shall be laid in my grave, and shall live no longer for this world but in the memory of those who will pray for my soul. But before I leave you for ever, — you, my grandchildren, whom I have loved with double tenderness: you, my nephews, for whom I have had all the anxieties and the affection of a father, — promise me that you will be as united in soul and purpose as you have been united in my heart. I have survived your fathers, though the eldest of them all; and God, doubtless, has preserved me to bind together your affections, by accustoming you to live together in one family, and to look up to one common parent. I have loved you all equally, as a father should, without exception, without preference. I have disposed of my throne according to the law of nature and the dictates of my conscience. Behold, then, the heirs to the throne of Naples: and you, Joan, and you, Andrea, ever keep in mind the respect and love which ought to exist between husband and wife, and which you have mutually sworn to observe before the altar: and all of you, my nephews, my nobles, my officers, pay homage to your legitimate sovereigns. For you, Andrea of Hungary, Louis of Tarento, Charles of Duras, remember that you are brothers, and woe to him who imitates the perfidy of Cain! May the blood he sheds be upon his head, — may he be cursed by Heaven, as he is cursed by the lips of a dying man; and may the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit descend upon such as are

honest and sincere at the moment when my soul is recalled to him who gave it!"

The king remained motionless, with uplifted arms, eyes raised toward heaven, and cheeks glowing with extraordinary brightness; whilst the princes, nobles, and officers, took the oath of fidelity and homage to Joan and her husband. But when the turn of the Princes of Duras came, Charles passed contemptuously by Andrea, and dropping on one knee before the princess, said in a loud voice, kissing her hand as he spoke: —

"To you only, my queen, I render my homage."

All eyes were turned with terror toward the dying man; but the good old king was now insensible to all that passed around him. Donna Sancia, observing that he was stiff and motionless, exclaimed, with a voice interrupted by tears and sobs, "The king is dead! Let us pray for his soul."

But in a moment all the princes rushed out of the room, and their passions — till now restrained by the presence of the king — burst forth like a torrent which has overflowed its banks.

"Long live Joan!" Robert of Cabane, Louis of Tarento, and Bertrand of Artois were the first to exclaim, while Andrea's tutor, energetically apostrophising the members of the council of regency, shouted at the top of his voice, "Signore, you already forget the will of the king. You must also cry 'Long live Andrea!'" and, himself giving the example and making himself heard above the tumult of all the assembled nobles, he shouted with a voice of thunder, "Long live the King of Naples!" But no responsive voice echoed his cry, and Charles of Duras, casting a terrible look upon the Dominican, advanced toward the queen, and, taking her by the hand, he drew aside the curtains of

the balcony which looked out upon the square and the town. An immense crowd, visible in the moonlight, covered the space beneath as far as the eye could reach, and thousands of human heads were raised toward the balcony of the palace, anxiously waiting the expected announcement. Then Charles, drawing himself respectfully to one side, and pointing with his hand to his beautiful cousin, cried, "Neapolitan people, the king is dead; long live the queen!"

"Long live Joan, the Queen of Naples!" answered the people, with one tremendous shout, which resounded through all parts of the city.

The events which had followed one another on this night, with the rapidity of a troubled dream, had had a powerful effect upon the mind of Joan, and, agitated by a thousand conflicting emotions, she retired to her apartments, and, locking herself in her chamber, gave full vent to her grief. Whilst every one else around the coffin of the Neapolitan monarch was filled with ambition and self-interest, the young queen, refusing all consolation, bitterly mourned the death of her grandfather, who had loved her even to weakness. As to the king, he was solemnly interred in the church of Santa Chiara, which he had founded and consecrated, after enriching it by the magnificent frescos of Giotto, and by several precious relics, among which may be seen to this day, behind the high altar, two columns of white marble, taken from the Temple of Solomon. Here also the king's statue still remains, representing him upon his tomb in the dress of a king and the robe of a priest, on the right of the monument of his son, Charles, Duke of Calabria.

Immediately after the celebration of the funeral rites, Andrea's preceptor hastily assembled the principal Hungarian nobles; and it was decided in this conclave that

despatches should be sent to Elizabeth of Poland, his mother, and to Louis of Hungary, his brother, to inform them of the purport of Robert's will; and that they should, at the same time, lay a complaint before the papal court of Avignon of the conduct of the princes and Neapolitan people, in proclaiming Joan sole Queen of Naples, in contempt of the rights of her husband, for whom they should solicit a bull of coronation.

Friar Robert, who had a profound knowledge of court intrigue, and combined the experience of a man of the world with the cunning of a monk, had explained to his pupil that it was necessary to take advantage of the grief into which the king's death had plunged Joan, and not to allow her favourites time to surround her with their flatteries and counsels.

Owing to the violence of Joan's grief, she became the sooner calm and composed; new thoughts began to occupy her mind, the traces of her tears disappeared from her face, and a smile began to sparkle in her humid eyes, like a sunbeam after a shower. This change, anxiously watched and impatiently expected, was soon observed by Joan's young attendant, who then ventured, on her knee, to offer to her beautiful mistress the first congratulations upon her accession to the throne. Joan embraced her tenderly; for Donna Cancia was not merely her attendant, but the companion of her infancy, the depositary of all her secrets, and the confidant of her most hidden thoughts.

Donna Cancia had one of those open and cheerful faces which at once inspire confidence and affection. Her beautiful auburn hair, fine blue eyes, arch-looking mouth, and delicately rounded chin gave an irresistible charm to her countenance. Wanton, gay, and fickle, voluptuous and deceitful, but full of wit and talent, and captivating

even in her faults, she was, at sixteen, as lovely as an angel and as depraved as a demon: the entire court adored her, and Joan loved her more than her own sister.

"Well, my dear Cancia," murmured the queen, with a sigh, "you see me very sad, and very unfortunate."

"You see me on the contrary, my beautiful sovereign," replied the confidant, casting a glance of admiration at Joan, "you see me very happy, to be able to kneel at your feet, and be the first to bear testimony to the joy which animates the Neapolitan people at this moment. Others, perhaps, will envy you the crown which glitters upon your brow, your throne, which is one of the greatest in the world, the acclamations of a whole city assembled to render you their devotion rather than their homage; but I, madame, I covet rather your beautiful black hair, your bewitching looks, your ineffable grace, which cause you to be adored by every one."

"You are nevertheless aware, my Cancia, that I have much to complain of, both as a queen and a woman: at fifteen years of age a crown is heavy to bear, and I do not even enjoy the liberty of the meanest of my subjects, — the liberty of the affections; before I had attained a sufficient age to think for myself they sacrificed me to a man whom I can never love."

"But, madame," replied the attendant, in a most insinuating voice, "there is now at this court a young gentleman who, by his respect, his devotion, and his love, ought to make you forget the wrongs of this foreigner, who is not worthy of being either our king or your husband."

The queen sighed deeply.

"How long is it," she replied, "since you lost the power of comprehending my feelings? Ought I to con-

fess to you that this love makes me miserable? It is true that at first this criminal emotion made me feel as though a new life were waking in my soul; I have been entranced, seduced by the prayers, the tears, the despair of this young man, by the facilities allowed us by his mother, whom I have ever looked upon as mine: I have loved him — my God! young as I am, to have been so miserable! Strange thoughts sometimes enter my mind, — that he loves me no longer, that he has never loved me, that ambition, interest, unworthy motives, have made him pretend a passion which he has never felt; I myself feel an indifference to him for which I cannot account; his presence constrains me, his look disturbs me, his voice makes me tremble, — I dread it, and would gladly give a year of my youth that I had never heard it."

These words appeared to move the young confidant deeply: her brow became clouded with sadness; she fixed her eyes upon the ground, and remained for some time silent, showing by her manner more of sorrow than surprise. Then, slowly raising her head, she answered with visible confusion: —

"I should not have dared to judge so severely the man whom my sovereign has raised so far above all others by giving him one look of kindness; but if Robert of Cabane has deserved being reproached with fickleness and ingratitude, and has basely perjured himself, he must be the most worthless of men; for he has despised the happiness which others have prayed to God to grant them at the price of their salvation. I know one who weeps day and night, without consolation and without hope, — who suffers and wastes away from a slow and cruel malady, which one pitying word would cure, if that word were but uttered by the lips of my noble mistress."

"I will hear no more," exclaimed Joan, hastily rising; "I do not wish to add another source of remorse to my life. Misfortune has reached me alike in my lawful and in my illicit love. Alas! I will no longer court my terrible destiny. I will bow my head without murmuring; and, remembering that I am a queen, will live but for the happiness of my subjects."

"Will you, then, forbid me, madame," replied Donna Cancia, in a soft and caressing voice, "will you, then, forbid me to pronounce in your presence the name of Bertrand of Artois, an unfortunate young man, beautiful as an angel, and bashful as a maiden? And, now that you are queen, now that you hold in your hands the life and death of your subjects, do you refuse mercy to a poor youth who has committed no other offence than that of adoring you, and is ready to die with joy when you deign to look upon him?"

"I have always endeavoured to avoid looking on him!" cried the queen, with a burst of feeling which she found it impossible to restrain; but she immediately added in a severe tone, in order to efface the impression produced upon the mind of her attendant by this avowal: —

"I forbid you to mention his name before me; and if he dares to allow any complaint to reach my ears, I authorise you to say to him, from me, that he shall instantly be banished for ever from my presence."

"In that case, madame, banish me also from your sight; for I shall never have the strength to obey so cruel a command. As to the unfortunate young man himself, who has failed to awaken in your breast one feeling of compassion, you may yourself overwhelm him by your anger; for here he is before you, to learn his fate and to die at your feet!"

At these words, uttered loudly that they might be

heard from without, Bertrand of Artois rushed into the apartment, and fell at the queen's feet. For some time past the young confidant had observed that Robert of Cabane had lost Joan's love, and that his tyranny had become more odious to her than that of her husband. Donna Cancia did not fail to remark that her mistress's eyes frequently rested with a melancholy expression upon Bertrand, a handsome young man of a grave and thoughtful mien; and when she made up her mind to speak in his favour, she was convinced that the queen already loved him.

Nevertheless, Joan's brow became flushed, and she was about to give way to anger, when the sound of footsteps was heard in the next room, and the voice of the governess, in conversation with her son, came upon the three young people like a clap of thunder. Cancia turned as pale as death; Bertrand believed himself doubly lost, in knowing that his presence would ruin the queen: Joan alone, with the admirable presence of mind which she retained in the most difficult moments of her life, made the young man conceal himself in the large folds of her bed-curtains, where he was completely hidden from view, and then made a sign to Cancia to withdraw before the entrance of the governess and her son.

But, previous to introducing these two personages into the royal apartment, we must relate by what extraordinary combination of circumstances, and with what incredible rapidity, the family of the Catanian (as she was called) had risen from the lowest class of the people to the highest rank in the court.

At the time when Donna Violante d'Aragon, the first wife of Robert of Anjou, was delivered of Charles, who afterward died the Duke of Calabria, a nurse was sought for him among the most beautiful women of the lower

classes. After considerable search the princess fixed on a young Catanian, named Filippa, the wife of a fisherman of Trapani, and herself a washerwoman. The young woman, after washing one day her linen by the side of a fountain, had had a strange dream, in which she imagined that she had been presented at court, that she had married a person of high rank, and received the honours of a great lady: and now, when she was summoned to the palace, her dream seemed about to be realised. Filippa was installed at court, and a few months after she had commenced nursing the royal infant, her husband the fisherman died. About this time, Raymond of Cabane, major-domo of Charles II., having purchased a negro from some pirates, had him baptised by his own name, made him free, and, observing that he was not wanting either in manners or intelligence, he appointed him the king's chief cook, after which he departed to the wars.

During the absence of his protector the negro remained at court, and managed his affairs so well that in a short time he purchased estates, houses, farms, silver plate, and horses, affecting to be able to rival in magnificence the wealthiest nobles in the kingdom; and as he had continued to ingratiate himself more and more in the favour of the royal family, he was promoted from the royal kitchen to the wardrobe. At the same time the Catanian had so well merited the favour of her patrons that, to recompense her for the attention she had given the child, the princess married her to the negro, and as a nuptial present he received the honour of knighthood. From that time Raymond of Cabane and Filippa the washerwoman rose so rapidly that their influence at court became established.

After the death of Donna Violante, the Catanian

gained the friendship of Donna Sancia, Robert's second wife, with whom our readers became acquainted at the commencement of our story. Charles, her foster son, loved her as a mother, and she was successively the confidant of his two wives, more especially of the second, Marie de Valois. And as the *ci-devant* washerwoman had now learnt the usages and manners of the court, as soon as Joan and her sister passed their childhood, she was appointed governess of the young ladies, and at the same time Raymond was made major-domo. Afterward, Marie de Valois, upon her death-bed, recommended to her care the young princesses, and begged her to consider them as her daughters; and Filippa the Catanian, honoured from henceforth as the mother of the heiress of the Neapolitan throne, had sufficient influence to have her husband appointed grand seneschal, — one of the seven highest posts in the kingdom, — and her three sons made knights. Raymond of Cabane was interred with royal magnificence in the church of the Holy Sacrament, and two of his sons soon afterward followed him. The third, Robert, a young man of extraordinary strength and beauty, was appointed major-domo, and the two daughters of his eldest brother were married, the one to the count of Terlizzi, and the other to the Count of Morcone.

Things were in this state, and the power of Filippa seemed firmly established, when an unexpected event took place to weaken her influence, if not to shake in one day to its foundation the whole edifice of her fortune, so patiently and laboriously raised, stone by stone, to its present height. The stern apparition of Friar Robert, who had followed his young pupil, destined from infancy to be the husband of Joan, to the court of Rome, opposed the designs of the Catanian, and seriously threatened her future progress. The monk was not long in observing

that so long as Filippa remained at court, Andrea would be but the slave, if not the victim, of his wife. All the energies of Friar Robert's mind were therefore secretly concentrated upon one object, the removal of the Catanian, and the overthrow of her power.

The prince's preceptor, and the governess of the heiress of the throne, upon their first meeting, exchanged one cold and piercing glance, sufficiently expressive of their reciprocal sentiments. The Catanian, not having the courage to struggle openly with her rival, conceived the scheme of maintaining her waning ascendency over her pupil by means of her corruption. She gradually insinuated into her mind the poison of vice, inflamed her young imagination with precocious desires, sowed in her heart the seeds of invincible hatred to her husband, surrounded the unfortunate girl with women of bad character, and, in particular, attached to her person the lovely and seducing Cancia, whose name has been branded with infamy by contemporary writers; and, to put a finishing stroke to her atrocious lessons, she prostituted Joan to her own son. The poor child, involved in guilt almost before she knew its nature, yielded to her first passion with all the ardour of youth, and loved Robert of Cabane with such extreme devotion that the cunning Catanian, congratulating herself upon the success of her infamous undertaking, believed her prey so wholly in her power that she took no pains to prevent her escape.

A year passed on before Joan, absorbed by her own infatuation, conceived the possibility of her lover's insincerity. The young man, more under the influence of ambition than of love, concealed his coldness by an appearance of brotherly intimacy, blind submission, and entire devotedness, and would probably have succeeded for a long time in deceiving his mistress, had not the young Count

of Artois become, in his turn, desperately enamoured of Joan. The eyes of the princess were suddenly opened, in comparing the feelings of the two. With that instinct of the heart which never deceives a woman, she saw that Robert of Cabane loved her for himself, while Bertrand of Artois would gladly have surrendered his life for her happiness. A ray of light illumined the past. She went over again in her mind the circumstances which had preceded and accompanied her first attachment; and her blood froze in her veins when the conviction first burst upon her that she had been sacrificed to a base seducer, by the woman whom of all others she had loved the most, and whom she had called by the name of mother.

Joan communed with herself, and wept bitterly. Deceived in all her affections, she devoured her grief in secret, — until at length, animated by sudden indignation, she roused herself from her stupor, and changed her love to disdain. Robert, astonished at her haughty and cold manner to him, after so much tenderness, irritated by his jealousy, and wounded in his self-love, burst forth into bitter reproaches and violent recriminations, and, letting the mask fall from his face, he lost his last hold on the heart of the princess.

Filippa now saw that it was time to interfere; she reproached her son, accusing him of having, by his bad management, undermined all her projects.

"Since you are not able to govern her mind by love," she said, "Joan must be ruled by fear. We have the secret of her honour, and she will never dare to rebel against us. It is evident she loves Bertrand of Artois, whose downcast looks and humble sighs contrast favourably with your haughty negligence and rude bearing. The mother of the princes of Tarento, the Empress of Constantinople, will eagerly seize the opportunity of

favouring the amours of the princess, in order to estrange her more and more from her husband: Cancia will be the chosen messenger, and, sooner or later, we shall surprise D'Artois at Joan's feet. And then she will not dare refuse us anything."

It was in the midst of these intrigues that the old king died; and the Catanian, who had been constantly waiting the time which she had so clearly foreseen, having observed the Count of Artois steal into Joan's apartment, called her son in a loud voice, and, hurrying him away with her: —

"Follow me!" she cried; "the queen is ours!"

It was with this intention that, accompanied by Robert, she now entered the queen's apartment.

Joan stood in the middle of the room, her face as pale as death, her eyes fixed upon the curtains of her bed. Endeavouring to disguise her agitation by a smile, she made a step toward her governess, and bowed her head to receive the kiss which it was the custom of the Catanian to bestow upon her every morning. Filippa embraced her with affected cordiality, and, turning to her son, who had bent one knee to the ground, —

"Permit, my fair sovereign," said she, pointing to Robert, "the humblest of your subjects to offer you his sincere congratulations, and to lay his homage at your feet."

"Rise, Robert," said Joan, holding out her hand to him with kindness, and without allowing him to perceive the slightest bitterness in her manner. "We have been brought up together, and I shall never forget that in my infancy — that is to say, in those happy days when we were both innocent — I used to call you brother."

"Since you allow it, madame," answered Robert, with an ironical smile, "I, too, will never cease to remember the names which you once deigned to apply to me."

"For me, I shall forget that I address the Queen of Naples," said the Catanian, "while I hold once more to my heart my well-loved child. Now, madame, dispel this melancholy; you have wept enough, and we have respected your grief sufficiently. It is time for you to show yourself to the good Neapolitans, who never cease blessing Heaven for having given them a queen so fair and generous; it is time to show yourself in your charms before your loyal subjects; and my son, who surpasses them all in fidelity, in order to serve you with the greater zeal, has come before them all, to ask you to grant him one favour."

Joan cast an indignant glance at Robert, and, addressing the Catanian, she replied with haughty contempt:

"You, my governess, know that I have nothing to refuse to your son."

"He asks only," continued the governess, "a title which is but due to him, and which he inherits from his father, — that of grand seneschal of the kingdom: I trust, my child, you will have no difficulty in complying with his request."

"The members of the council of regency must be first consulted."

"The council will hasten to ratify the wishes of the queen," replied Robert, holding out the parchment to her with a commanding gesture; "you only wish to consult the Count of Artois." And he cast a terrific glance upon the curtain, which was at this moment slightly agitated.

"You are right," faintly replied the queen; and, going to the table, she signed the parchment with a trembling hand.

"And now, my child, by all the cares I paid you in your infancy, by that more than maternal love which I

have ever felt for you, I implore you to grant us a favour of which our family will retain an everlasting remembrance."

The queen drew back, crimsoned with anger and astonishment; but, before she could find words to frame her answer, the Catanian continued in the same unmoved tone: —

"I ask you to create my son Count of Eboli."

"I have not the power, madame; the nobles of the kingdom would rise in a body if I were to raise, by my simple authority, to one of the principal counties in the kingdom, the son of a — "

"Of a washerwoman and a negro, you would say, madame," replied Robert, with a sneer. "Bertrand of Artois would possibly be offended were I called by the same title as himself."

And he made a step toward the bed, at the same time laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword.

"For pity's sake, Robert!" cried the queen, holding him back; "I will do all that you require."

And she signed the parchment, creating him Count of Eboli.

"And now that my title may not be illusory," continued Robert, with the utmost effrontery, "and as you are now engaged in signing, grant me the privilege of taking part in the councils of the crown, and declare, by your good pleasure, that in all matters of importance my mother and myself shall have a deliberative voice in the council."

"Never!" cried Joan, the colour deserting her cheeks. "Filippa, Robert, you abuse my weakness; you are treating your queen unworthily. I have wept and suffered during the whole of these last days, and, overcome with sorrow, I have not sufficient strength to occupy

myself with affairs of moment. I beseech you to retire; I am ill."

"What, my daughter," answered the Catanian, in a hypocritical tone, "do you feel unwell? Come then, lie down." And, advancing toward the bed, she grasped the curtain which concealed the Count of Artois.

The queen uttered a piercing shriek, and threw herself before her governess.

"Stop," she cried in a suffocated voice, "here is the privilege which you ask, and now, if you value your lives, begone!"

Filippa and her son immediately departed without reply, for they had obtained all that they desired; and Joan, trembling with anger and shame, advanced toward Bertrand of Artois, who, furious with rage, had drawn his poniard, and was about to rush upon the two favourites to avenge the insults they had offered to their queen; but the young man was soon disarmed by the supplicating power of Joan's beautiful eyes, by the arms thrown beseechingly around his waist, and by the tears which fell upon her cheeks. He fell at her feet, which he kissed with transport. Without remembering to ask her pardon for his presence, without speaking to her of his love, he lavished upon her the most tender caresses, as if they had always been lovers, wiped away her tears, and pressed her beautiful hair with his trembling lips.

Joan by degrees forgot her anger, her resolutions, and her repentance; soothed by the soft speeches of her lover, she answered in monosyllables, without understanding what she said; her heart beat as though it would burst from her bosom, and every painful feeling was lost in the happiness of the moment; a new noise suddenly awoke her from her dream. This time, however, the young count had time to withdraw into a neigh-

bouring apartment, and Joan prepared to receive her unwelcome visitor with cold and severe dignity.

The person who arrived thus unseasonably, to bring down upon himself the storm which lowered on the queen's brow, was Charles, the eldest of the branch of Duras. After presenting his lovely cousin to the people as their only legitimate sovereign, he sought upon several occasions the opportunity of having an interview with her, — an interview which, in all probability, would be decisive of his schemes. Charles was one of those men who hesitate at no means by which their object may be attained. Devoured by ambition; accustomed from his earliest youth to conceal his most ardent desires under a careless levity; proceeding, step by step, toward a determined end, without swerving a hair's breadth from the way which he had traced out; redoubling his prudence at each victory, and his courage at each defeat; gloomy in pleasure, smiling in hate, impenetrable in the strongest emotions of his life,— he had sworn to sit upon the throne of Naples, to which he had for a long time believed himself Robert's heir, as the nearest in succession of his nephews; and to him, in fact, rightly belonged the hand of Joan, if the old king had not resolved, at the close of his reign, to summon Andrea of Hungary and reinstate the eldest branch in their rights, of which no one had now any recollection. But neither the arrival of Andrea nor the indifference with which Joan, occupied by other passions, invariably received the advances of her cousin of Duras, had weakened for a moment his resolution; for the love of a woman, and the life of a man, weighed nothing in the mind of Charles when a crown hung at the other end of the scales.

After hovering round the queen's apartments all the time she remained strictly invisible, Charles presented

himself, with respectful haste, to inquire after his cousin's health. He conversed for a long time with his cousin on the enthusiasm which the people had shown upon her accession to the throne, and the brilliant destiny she would have to fill; he drew a rapid and correct picture of the situation of the kingdom. Whilst lavishing praises upon the queen's wisdom, he adroitly pointed out the improvements which the country most urgently required; and he threw into his discourse so much warmth, tempered by discretion, that he began to overcome the unfavourable impression which his arrival had produced.

In spite of the errors of a youth depraved by the most lamentable education, Joan was of a noble nature. Rising above her age and sex, while occupying herself with the welfare of her subjects, she forgot her singular situation, and listened to the Duke of Duras with warm interest and the utmost attention. He proceeded to hazard allusions to the dangers which threatened the young queen: he hinted vaguely at the difficulty of distinguishing true devotion from base obsequiousness and interested attachment; he spoke warmly of the ingratitude of persons who had been loaded with benefits and deeply trusted. Joan, who had just experienced a melancholy proof of the truth of his words, answered with a sigh, and said after a pause:—

"I take God to witness my own honest and upright intentions, and pray him to unmask traitors, and show me who are my true friends! I know that the burden which is imposed upon me is a heavy one, and that I must not count too much upon my own strength; but the tried experience of the persons to whom my grandfather has confided my youth, the number of my family, and, above all, your pure and cordial friendship,

will assist me, I trust, in the accomplishment of my duties."

"It is my most sincere prayer that you may succeed, my fair cousin. It is not my wish to darken by thoughts of mistrust and doubt the moments which should be given up to happiness. I do not wish to mingle with the joy which bursts from every part of the kingdom, in saluting you as queen, useless regrets at the blind destiny which placed by the side of a woman whom we all adore — by your side, my cousin, from whom one single glance renders a man far happier than the angels — a stranger, unworthy of sharing your heart, incapable of sharing your throne."

"You forget, Charles," said the queen, stretching out her hand as if to arrest his words, — "you forget that Andrea is my husband, and that it is the will of my grandfather that he shall reign with me."

"Never!" cried the duke, indignantly. "He King of Naples! Consider that the city will be shaken to its foundations, that the people will revolt in a mass, before the Neapolitans will allow themselves to be governed by a handful of drunken and ferocious Hungarians, by a deformed and hypocritical monk, by a prince whom we detest as much as we love you."

"But what is it you reproach him with? What has he done?"

"What has he done? What do we reproach him with? The people reproach him with being incapable, clownish, and brutal; the nobles reproach him with the violation of their privileges, and with patronising men of obscure birth; and I, madame," he continued, lowering his voice, — "I reproach him with being the cause of your unhappiness."

Joan started, as if a rude hand had been laid upon her

wound; but, concealing her emotion under an apparent calm, she answered in a tone of indifference: —

"I think you rave, Charles; who has authorised you to believe me unhappy?"

"Do not endeavour to excuse him, my cousin," replied Charles, emphatically; "you will but ruin yourself, without saving him."

The queen fixed upon her cousin a piercing look, as if to read the depths of his soul, and to fathom the meaning of those words; but not being able to believe the horrible thought which at first rose to her mind, in order to penetrate his motives she affected entire confidence in his friendship, and proceeded in her former indifferent tone: —

"Well, Charles, supposing that I am not happy, what cure can you propose to me for the evil?"

"Do you ask it, my cousin? Are not all means justifiable for your happiness?"

"But Andrea will not easily renounce his pretensions: he is supported by a powerful party, and in case of an open rupture, his brother, the King of Hungary, will declare war against us, and bring desolation into the kingdom."

The Duke of Duras smiled slightly, and his features assumed a sinister expression.

"You do not understand my meaning, cousin."

"Explain it, then, without delay," said the queen, endeavouring to conceal the cold shudder which came over her at these words.

"Listen, Joan," said Charles, taking her hand, and placing it on his breast. "Do you feel this dagger?"

"I feel it," said Joan, turning pale.

"One word from you, and—"

"Well, proceed."

"—to-morrow you shall be free!"

"A murder!" cried Joan, recoiling with horror. "I have, then, been deceived! It is a murder which you have been proposing."

"Undoubtedly!" replied the duke, calmly, "it is indispensable. To-day it is I who advise it; later, it will be you who will command it."

"Enough, wretch! I do not know whether your conduct is more base than bold, or more bold than base, —base, in having avowed to me a criminal project, because you knew I would not denounce you; bold, in having avowed it to me without knowing whether other ears than mine listened to your atrocious language."

"Well, madame, since I am now at your mercy, you will understand that I cannot leave you without knowing whether I am to consider you as my friend or my enemy."

"Away!" cried Joan, with a gesture of scorn; "you insult your queen!"

"You forget, my cousin, that one day I may have a right to your kingdom."

"Do not force me to have you thrust from my presence," said Joan, advancing toward the door.

"Restrain your passion, my fair cousin. I leave you; but recollect, at least, that I have offered you my help, and that you have refused it. Remember well what I say to you at this very serious moment. To-day I am the culprit; to-morrow, perhaps, I shall be the judge."

And he slowly retired, twice turning his head, and renewing, by a warning gesture, his threatening prophecy. Joan hid her face in her hands, and remained a long time buried in melancholy thought, until, anger predominating over all other feelings, she summoned Cancia,

and ordered her on no pretext whatever to permit any person to enter her apartment.

This prohibition did not extend to the Count of Artois, for the reader will remember that he was in the adjoining room.

Night had by this time thrown its shadow around, and the deepest silence had succeeded to the thousand cries of the most noisy city in the world. Charles of Duras, hurrying rapidly from the palace, plunged into the labyrinth of narrow and winding streets, which cross each other in all directions in the old city, and after a quarter of an hour's walk, sometimes slow, and at others rapid, according to the workings of his mind, he arrived at his own mansion. After giving some orders to one of his pages, to whom he handed his sword and cloak, Charles proceeded to his apartment, without visiting his poor mother, who, sad and solitary, was at this moment weeping at the ingratitude of her son, and avenging herself, like all mothers, by praying to God for him.

The Duke of Duras strode to and fro in his chamber, like a lion in his cage, counting the minutes in violent impatience. He was about to summon one of his servants, to renew his orders, when two gentle taps at the door announced to him that the person whom he expected had arrived. He opened it quickly, and a man about fifty years old, dressed in black, entered with the most humble reverences, and carefully closed the door after him. Charles threw himself upon a seat, and fixing an earnest look upon the man, who stood before him with downcast eyes, and his arms crossed upon his breast, in an attitude of the most profound respect, he said to him slowly and emphatically: —

"Master Nicolas de Melazzo, do you retain any remembrance of the favours which I have shown you?"

The man to whom these words were addressed shuddered, as though he had heard the voice of Satan reclaiming his soul: and casting a terrified glance upon his interrogator, he inquired in a low voice, —

"What have I done, monsignor, to deserve such a reproach?"

"I do not mean it as a reproach, notary; it is a simple question."

"Can you doubt for a moment, monsignor, my eternal gratitude? I forget what I owe to your Excellency! Even supposing I had so completely lost my senses and my memory, have I not my wife and my son, to remind me daily that to you we owe fortune, life, and honour? I am guilty of an infamous action," continued the notary, lowering his voice; "of a crime, which not only draws down upon me the punishment of death, but the confiscation of my goods, the ruin of my family, the misery and shame of my only son, — of that same son for whom, wretch that I was, I wished to secure a brilliant future by means of a dreadful crime; in your hands were the proofs of this crime — "

"They are so still — "

"You will not destroy me, monsignor!" exclaimed the notary, trembling from head to foot. "You see me at your feet; take my life, your Excellency, I will expire in torments without one complaint; but save my son, since you have been merciful enough to spare him until now. Mercy for his mother! mercy, mercy, monsignor!"

"Be calm," said Charles, making him a sign to rise; "there is now no question of your life, although that perhaps may one day come. What I require of you at present is much easier."

"I await your orders, monsignor."

"At once, then," continued the duke, in an ironical tone of rapture, "you will draw out, in form, my marriage contract."

"Say on, your Excellency."

"You will write, in the first place, that my wife shall bring me, as a marriage portion, the county of Alba, the government of Grati and Giordano, with all the castles, fiefs, and territories, belonging to them."

"But, your Excellency —" answered the poor notary, in the greatest embarrassment.

"Do you find any difficulty in the execution of my orders, Master Nicolas?"

"God forbid, your Excellency! but —"

"What is it then that disturbs you?"

"It is — if monsignor will allow me — it is that there is but one person in Naples who possesses the property which your Excellency describes to me."

"Well?"

"And that person," stammered the notary, in still greater confusion, "is the sister of the queen."

"Exactly; and therefore you will fill up the contract with the name of Maria of Anjou."

"But," continued Master Nicolas, timidly, "the young princess, whom your Excellency wishes to marry, has been destined, I think, by the will of our deceased lord the king, of happy memory, to become the wife either of the reigning King of Hungary, or of the grandson of the King of France."

"Ah! ah! I begin to understand your astonishment, my dear notary; this will teach you in future that the will of the uncle is not always the desire of the nephew."

"In this case, if I dared — if monsignor would deign to grant me permission — if I had any advice to offer,

I would humbly implore your Excellency to reflect that you are planning the abduction of a minor."

"How long is it since you came by these scruples, Master Nicolas?"

This question was accompanied by so terrible a look that the poor notary had scarcely sufficient strength to answer him.

"In an hour the contract shall be ready."

"And now that we are agreed upon the first point," continued Charles, resuming his natural tone of voice, "pay attention to my second commission. I understand you have been intimately acquainted, for some years past, with the *valet de chambre* of the Duke of Calabria."

"Tommaso Pace? — he is my dearest friend."

"Excellent! Listen, then, and remember that upon your discretion depends the prosperity or the ruin of your family. A plot is about to be laid against the queen's husband; the conspirators will, doubtless, gain over Andrea's valet to their schemes, — this man whom you call your best friend. Never leave him for a moment; stick to him like his shadow; and, day by day, hour by hour, report faithfully to me the progress of the conspiracy and the names of the conspirators."

"Is this all that your Excellency has to command?"

"All."

The notary bowed respectfully, and departed to execute without delay the orders he had received. Charles passed the rest of the night in writing to his uncle, the Cardinal of Perigord, one of the most influential prelates at the court of Avignon. He prayed him, above all, to prevent Charles VI. from signing the bull of the coronation of Andrea; and closed his letter by the most earnest entreaties to his uncle to obtain permission from the Pope for him to marry the queen's sister.

"We shall see, my cousin," said he, as he closed his letter, "which of us two best understands our interests. You will not accept me for a friend. Good: then you shall have me for an enemy. Sleep on in the arms of your lovers; I will awaken you when the time shall come. One day, perhaps, I shall be Duke of Calabria: and that title, you are aware, my cousin, is that of heir to the throne!"

From that time an entire change took place in Charles's manner toward Andrea. He loaded him with marks of the liveliest sympathy, cunningly flattered his tastes, and pretended to Friar Robert that, far from being adverse to Andrea's coronation, his most ardent desire was to see the wishes of his uncle respected; and that, if he had seemed to act contrary to his sentiments, he had done so with the object of appeasing the populace: who, he feared, in their first excitement would have risen against the Hungarians. He energetically declared that he cordially detested those persons who surrounded the queen in order to mislead her by their advice; and pledged himself to join with Friar Robert in an effort to overthrow Joan's favourites by every means which fortune threw in his way.

Although the Dominican was by no means persuaded of the sincerity of his ally, he did not accept with the less joy a supporter who might be so useful to the cause of the prince,—attributing the sudden conversion of Charles to a recent rupture with his cousin, and trusting to turn the resentment of the Duke of Duras to account. Charles, in the mean time, had insinuated himself so completely into Andrea's good graces that in a few days they became inseparable. If Andrea prepared for hunting, Charles hastened to get his hounds and hawks; if Andrea rode through the town, Charles was sure to be at his

side. He yielded to all his caprices, flattered him to excess, inflamed his passions, and, in short, he was the familiar spirit who prompted all the thoughts of the prince, and directed all his actions.

Joan well understood these manœuvres. She could have undermined Duras by a single word; but, disdaining so poor a revenge, she continued to treat him with the utmost contempt.

The court was now divided into two parties: on the one side the Hungarians, directed by Friar Robert, and openly supported by Charles of Duras; and on the other, all the Neapolitan nobles, headed by the princes of Tarento. Joan, governed by Filippa and her two daughters, the Countesses of Terlizzi and Morcone, by Cancia, and by the Empress of Constantinople, embraced the Neapolitan party against her husband. The first act of the queen's partisans was to have her name inscribed to all public acts, without the addition of Andrea's signature; but Joan, guided, in the midst of her moral corruption, by the instinct of probity and justice, would never have consented to this step had she not been advised to it by Andrea of Isernia, one of the ablest lawyers of the day, equally respected for his character and talents.

The prince, irritated at seeing himself thus excluded from all the functions of his station, returned the insult by acts of violence and despotism. He delivered prisoners by his sole authority, shared his favours amongst the Hungarians, and heaped honours and riches upon Giovanni Pipino, Count of Altamura, the greatest enemy of the Neapolitan nobles. It was then that the Counts of San-Severino, Mileto, Terlizzi, Balzo, Catanzaro, together with the principal part of the aristocracy of the kingdom, exasperated by the daily inso-

lence of Andrea's favourite, decided, not only upon his ruin, but also upon that of his protector, if he persisted in attacking their privileges and braving their resentment.

On the other hand, the women who surrounded the queen encouraged her, each as moved by private interest, in her new passion; and poor Joan, deserted by her husband, betrayed by Cabane, bending under the burden of duties beyond her strength, sought refuge in the love of Bertrand of Artois, against which she no longer endeavoured to contend. As to Bertrand, he adored her with impassioned ardour. Arrived at a height of happiness which, in his wildest ravings, he had not dared to hope, the young count almost lost his senses. In vain did his father, Charles of Artois, Count of Ané, a lineal descendant of Philip the Bold, and one of the regents of the kingdom, endeavour, by the severest admonitions, to draw him from the brink of the precipice on which he was standing; Bertrand listened to nothing but his love for Joan and his deadly hatred for all her enemies. Often at the close of day, while the breeze from Pausilippo or Sorrento was playing in his hair, he might have been seen leaning upon one of the casements of the Castel-Nuovo, pale and motionless, gazing fixedly upon the street below, at the moment when the Dukes of Calabria and Duras, galloping side by side in the midst of a cloud of dust, were gaily returning from their evening ride. At this sight his brows became bent, and thoughts of vengeance and death took possession of his soul. Suddenly he might have been observed to start; a light hand was laid upon his shoulder, and, turning softly, for fear lest the divine apparition should vanish, he would see standing behind him a young woman with flushed cheeks, heaving breast, and moist

and sparkling eyes, who had come to relate to him in what duties and labours she had been passing the day. And this girl, who had been dictating laws, and administering justice among grave magistrates and austere ministers, was but fifteen years of age; while the young man, who consoled her in her grief, and meditated regicide to avenge her, was not yet twenty, — two children, thrown upon the world to be the sport of a terrible destiny.

CHAPTER II.

Two months and some days had elapsed since the death of the old king, when one morning, Friday, the 28th of March, 1343, Filippa, who had managed to obtain the queen's pardon for the base ambush by which she had forced her to sign whatever her son required, — Filippa, we say, in unassumed consternation, pale and agitated, entered the apartments of the queen, to announce to her a circumstance which would spread alarm and confusion throughout the court. Maria had disappeared. Search had been made in all the courts and gardens without discovering any trace of her; every corner of the palace had been examined; the guards had been interrogated and threatened with the torture, to draw the truth from them, — in vain. No one had seen the princess, and there was no indication which could justify the supposition of a flight or an abduction.

Joan was overcome by this unexpected blow in addition to all her former troubles, and was at first completely stunned by the intelligence. Even when she had recovered from the first shock she appeared out of her senses. She gave orders which were already executed, repeated the same inquiries a thousand times, and followed up her questions with useless lamentations and unjust reproaches. In a short time the news had spread in all directions, and the greatest excitement prevailed throughout the city, while confusion reigned in the palace. The members of the council of regency

assembled in haste; couriers were despatched, announcing a reward of three thousand golden ducats to the person who should discover where the princess was concealed; and the soldiers who were guarding the fortress at the time of her disappearance were thrown into prison.

Bertrand of Artois drew the queen aside and communicated to her his suspicions, which were directed against Charles of Duras; but Joan convinced him of the improbability of his supposition. In the first place, Charles had never once set foot in the palace since the day of his stormy interview with the queen; and, secondly, no one had ever observed that the young duke had addressed a single word to Maria, or exchanged a look with her. It was at length proved by all the witnesses examined that no stranger had penetrated into the interior of the palace on the evening preceding the event, except a notary of the name of Master Nicolas de Melazzo, an imbecile old man, for whom Tommaso Pace, the Duke of Calabria's *valet de chambre*, would answer with his head. Bertrand acquiesced in the queen's reasoning, and day after day he suggested new conjectures more or less improbable, to sustain his mistress in hopes which he was far from feeling.

A month after the disappearance of the young princess, the inhabitants of Naples were stupefied with astonishment, and the grief of Joan and her friends converted into rage, by a strange and unheard-of scene, almost surpassing belief. Upon the clock of the church of San Giovanni striking noon, the gates of the magnificent palace of the Duras family were thrown open, and a double file of horsemen, gallantly mounted, bearing upon their shields the ducal arms, came forth to the sound of trumpets, and ranged themselves round the house, in order to prevent the people without from inter-

rupting the proceedings which were about to take place (in the presence of an immense crowd, collected suddenly, and as if by enchantment) before the palace.

An altar had been raised at the bottom of the court, and before it were placed two crimson velvet cushions embroidered in gold with the *fleurs-de-lis* of France and the ducal coronet. Charles then advanced, magnificently attired, and holding by the hand the queen's sister, the Princess Maria, a girl not above thirteen years old. She knelt timidly upon one of the cushions, and when Charles had done the same, the grand almoner of the family solemnly inquired of the young duke what were his intentions in presenting himself in that humble attitude before one of the ministers of the church.

At these words, Nicolas de Melazzo placed himself on the left side of the altar, and commenced reading in a loud and firm voice the marriage contract between Charles and Maria, followed by the apostolical letters of his Holiness the sovereign pontiff Clement VI., who, removing all the obstacles which could prevent this union, — such as the age of the young maiden, and the degree of relationship existing between the pair, — authorised his well-beloved son, Charles, Duke of Duras and Albany, to espouse the very illustrious Maria of Anjou, sister of Joan, Queen of Naples and Jerusalem, and gave them his benediction.

The almoner then took the hand of the young princess, and, having placed it in that of Charles, he pronounced the prayers of the Church. After which, Charles, half turning toward the people, said in a loud voice, —

"Before God and man, this is my wife."

"And this is my husband," replied Maria, trembling.

"Long live the Duke and Duchess of Duras," cried the crowd, clapping their hands.

And the newly married pair, mounted upon superb horses, made the circuit of the city; after which they reentered their palace amidst the shouts of the populace, and the flourishes of trumpets.

When this incredible news was communicated to the queen, her first impression was that of great joy at the recovery of her sister; and as Bertrand of Artois was about to mount his horse at the head of the nobles, to attack the cortège and punish the ravisher, Joan retained him by the hand, and, fixing her eyes upon him, with an expression of the deepest melancholy, —

"Alas!" she said, "it is too late! They are lawfully married, since the head of the Church, who is at the same time, by the will of my grandfather, the head of our family, has granted them his permission. I can but pity my unfortunate sister; I pity her for being, so young, the prey of a monster who will sacrifice her to his ambition, hoping to obtain by these nuptials the right to my crown. My God! what a strange fatality is hanging over the royal branch of Anjou! My father died young, in the midst of his triumphs; my poor mother was not long in following him to the grave; and my sister and myself, the last of the race of Charles I., before arriving at womanhood, are delivered to wretches who regard us but as footstools by which they may mount to power."

Joan fell upon a seat, while a tear quivered upon her eyelid.

"This is the second time," replied Bertrand, in a reproachful tone, "that I have drawn my sword to avenge you, and the second time that, by your orders, I have sheathed it; but remember, Joan, that the third

time I shall not obey you so easily; for then my vengeance shall fall neither upon Robert of Cabane, nor upon Charles of Duras, — but upon him who is the origin of all your misfortunes."

"For pity's sake, Bertrand, do not you also speak to me upon such a subject. Am I not already unfortunate enough, without embittering my future life by eternal remorse? Speak to me rather of pardon and oblivion than of hate and vengeance; show me one ray of hope amidst the darkness which environs me, and sustain my tottering steps, rather than assist in thrusting me into the abyss."

These altercations were repeated upon every new injury from Andrea and his party; and in proportion as the remonstrances of Bertrand and his friends became more urgent, and, it must be allowed, more just, Joan's resistance was more feeble. The Hungarian domination became daily more and more arbitrary and insupportable; the people began to murmur, and the nobles loudly expressed their discontent. Andrea's soldiers gave themselves up to excesses which would not have been tolerated in a conquered city: they might be met with at every turn, squabbling in taverns, or wallowing in the most revolting state of drunkenness; whilst the prince, far from condemning their orgies, was accused of partaking them. His old tutor, whose duty it was, by his authority, to have drawn him from this ignoble state of existence, plunged him into brutish pleasures, to withdraw him from business, and hastened, without suspecting it, the catastrophe of the terrible drama which was in secret preparation at the Castel-Nuovo.

Robert's widow, Donna Sancia d'Aragon, the pious and excellent woman, whom our readers have, perhaps, forgotten in the same manner as she was forgotten in

her family, seeing the vengeance of Heaven about to fall upon her house, without having the power to arrest it by her counsels, prayers, or tears, after a whole year's stay in the palace, according to the promise she had made to her husband, took the veil, abandoning the wretched country to its insane passions, after the manner of the prophets of old, who shook the dust from their sandals, and fled from the accursed cities devoted to destruction. Sancia's retreat was a melancholy omen; and in a short time the intestine dissensions, hitherto concealed with difficulty, burst into the light of day. The storm which had been gathering in the distance, broke suddenly upon the city, and the thunderbolt was not long in descending.

On the last day of August, 1344, Joan paid homage to the legate of the Pope, who, since the donation which his predecessors had made of it to Charles of Anjou, after the excommunication and dethronement of the house of Suabia, had continued to look upon the kingdom of Naples as a fief belonging to the Church. The church of Santa Chiara, the tomb of the Neapolitan monarchs, in which reposed, at the right and left of the high altar, the queen's father and grandfather, was chosen for this solemn ceremony. Joan, arrayed in the royal robes, and wearing her crown, took the oath of fidelity before the apostolical legate, in the presence of her husband, who stood behind her merely as a witness, in the same manner as the other princes of the blood. Amongst the prelates who formed the august suite of the ambassador from Avignon, the archbishops of Pisa, Bari, Capua, and Brindisi, Ugolino, Bishop of Castella, and Philip, Bishop of Cavaillon, the queen's chancellor, were particularly distinguished. All the Neapolitan, as well as the Hungarian nobles, were present at this

act, which discarded Andrea from the throne in so formal and glaring a manner. Upon their return, therefore, from the church, the excitement of the two parties had reached such an alarming height, they exchanged such hostile looks and threatening words, that the prince, finding himself too weak to oppose his enemies, wrote the same evening to his mother, informing her of his intention of quitting a country in which, from his infancy, he had experienced nothing but deception and misfortune.

Those who know the heart of a mother will not require to be told that hardly was Elizabeth of Poland made aware of her son's danger ere she had arrived in Naples, before any one had suspicion of her approach. It was soon rumoured about that the Queen of Hungary had come to take her son away with her; and this unexpected step raised strange comments, and gave a new direction to the feverish disquiet of the public mind. The Empress of Constantinople, the Catanian, her two daughters, and all the courtiers, whose designs would have been thwarted by Andrea's sudden departure, hastened to welcome the arrival of the Queen of Hungary by the most cordial and respectful reception, to prove to her that the solitude and sullenness of the young prince, in the midst of so brilliant and devoted a court, was entirely owing to his own distrustful pride, and the natural waywardness of his temper.

Joan received her husband's mother with so much propriety and dignity that, in spite of her preconceived dislike, Elizabeth could not avoid admiring the character of her daughter-in-law. To render the noble stranger's stay in Naples more agreeable to her, fêtes and tournaments were commenced, in which the nobles of the kingdom strove to excel one another in pomp and

splendour. The Empress of Constantinople, Filippa, Charles of Duras, and his young wife were the most assiduous in their attentions to the prince's mother. Maria, who, from her extreme youth and the innocence of her character, took no share in the passing intrigues, yielded more to the impulse of her heart than to the commands of her husband, in treating the Queen of Hungary with all the affection and tenderness of a daughter to a mother. But, notwithstanding all these appearances of respect and love, Elizabeth of Poland, trembling for her son, by an instinct of maternal solicitude, persisted in her first resolution, not believing him in safety until he was far away from that court, so calm in appearance, so perfidious in reality.

The man who felt the greatest consternation at this proposed departure, and who endeavoured to prevent it by every means in his power, was Friar Robert. Plunged into the depths of political intrigue, and bent on the accomplishment of mysterious plans, the Dominican saw his game about to be lost at the moment when, by force of cunning, labour, and patience, he at length felt himself able to crush his enemies. But the voice of fear spoke louder in Elizabeth's heart than the monk's reasoning, and at each argument he brought forward, she contented herself with replying that so long as her son was not king, and had not entire and unlimited power, it was imprudent to leave him exposed to his enemies.

The minister, seeing that all would be lost, and that it would be impossible to contend with this woman's apprehensions, begged of her to grant him three days; and if, at the conclusion of that space, the answer he expected had not arrived, not only would he desist from opposing Andrea's departure, but he himself would fol-

low him, renouncing for ever the objects which had cost him so much.

Toward the end of the third day, and as Elizabeth was definitively preparing to set off, the monk entered her room with a joyful air, and showed her a letter.

"God be praised, madame," he cried in a triumphant voice, "I can now give you an indisputable proof of the activity of my zeal and of the soundness of my foresight."

Andrea's mother, after eagerly perusing the parchment, fixed her eyes upon the monk with an expression of doubt, hardly daring to credit the happy intelligence.

"Yes, madame," continued the monk, "yes, madame, you may believe your eyes, although you would not believe my words; you deemed my plan but the raving of a too ardent imagination, the hallucination of a too credulous mind, instead of a carefully conceived scheme, slowly worked out and cunningly conducted, — the fruit of my labours, the sole thought of my days, the work of my whole life. I was not ignorant that your son's cause had powerful enemies at the court of Avignon; but I was also aware that on the day upon which I, in the name of my prince, should solemnly engage to repeal those laws which were the cause of the coolness between the Pope and Robert, otherwise so devoted to the Church, — I was aware they could not resist my offer, and this proposal I retained as a last resource. You see, madame, that my calculations were correct; our enemies are confounded, and your son is triumphant."

And, turning to Andrea, who at that moment entered the room, —

"Approach, my son," he exclaimed; "our wishes are at length accomplished, and you are king!"

"King!" repeated Andrea, motionless with joy, doubt, and astonishment.

"King of Sicily and Jerusalem; oh! yes, monsignor, you do not require to read it in this parchment, which brings us such joyful and unhoped for intelligence, — you may see it in your mother's tears, who is opening her arms to fold you to her breast; you may see it in your preceptor's transports, who throws himself at your feet, to salute you by a title which he would have sealed by his own blood had it been much longer denied to you."

"Nevertheless," said Elizabeth, after remaining for some time in deep thought, "did I listen to my presentiments, this news should make no alteration in our plans of departure!"

"No, my mother," replied Andrea, with energy, "you would not have me quit the kingdom to the detriment of my honour. If I have confided to you the bitterness and the misery which my enemies have heaped upon my youth, it was not cowardice which made me act thus, but my inability to take a terrible revenge for their secret insults, open outrages, and underhand plots. It was not strength that I wished for to my arms, but a crown upon my head. I might have been able to have crushed some of these wretches, perhaps the most audacious, perhaps the least dangerous; but I should have struck in the dark, the chiefs would have escaped me, I should not have reached the heart of this infernal conspiracy. For this reason, I have devoured in silence my shame and indignation. But now that my sacred claims are recognised by the Church, you, my mother, shall see these valiant nobles, these counsellors of the queen, these ministers of the kingdom, — you shall see them lick the dust beneath my feet; for it shall not be a sword

which shall threaten them, it shall be no combat which I shall propose to them, it shall not be an equal that shall speak to them; no! the king shall accuse, the law condemn, and the gibbet punish."

"Oh, my dear son," cried the weeping queen, "I have never doubted either the nobleness of your sentiments or the justice of your claims; but when your life is in danger, can I listen to any other voice but that of fear? Can I hear any other advice but that with which my love inspires me?"

"Credit me, my mother; if the hands of these wretches had not trembled as much as their hearts, you would long since have mourned your son."

"And therefore it is not violence that I dread, but treachery."

"My life belongs to God, as all men's do, and the commonest person may take it at a street corner; but a king must confide in his people."

The poor mother endeavoured for a long time, by reasoning and entreaties, to change Andrea's resolution: but when she had exhausted her last argument, and shed her last tear, she summoned Bertram de Baux, chief judge of the kingdom, and Maria, Duchess of Duras, and, confiding in the wisdom of the old man and the innocence of the young woman, she recommended her son to their care; then, drawing from her finger a richly chased ring, she took Andrea aside and placed it upon his finger, and clasping him in her arms, —

"My son," she said, in a trembling voice, "since you refuse to accompany me, here is a talisman which I never make use of but in the last extremity. While you retain this ring upon your finger, neither steel nor poison can injure you."

"You see, then, my mother," answered the prince,

smiling, "thus protected, you have no reason to fear for my life."

"There are other deaths besides by poison or steel," replied the queen, sighing.

"Take courage, my mother: the most potent talisman against all dangers will be your prayers to God for me. The remembrance of you shall sustain me in the path of duty; and your maternal love will watch me from afar, and will cover me with its wings like a guardian angel."

Elizabeth embraced her son again and departed, followed by all the court, who continued to pay her the utmost courtesy and respect. The poor mother, pale and trembling, leant upon her son's arm. When they had reached the vessel which was to separate them for ever, she threw herself for the last time upon his neck, and remained for some time without uttering a sound, shedding a tear, or making the slightest motion; and when the signal of departure was given, her women received her in their arms almost insensible. Andrea remained standing upon the beach, his eyes fixed upon the vessel, now rapidly disappearing, which contained the only being upon earth whom he loved.

Almost at the same time that Andrea's mother left the kingdom, the dowager Queen of Naples, widow of Robert, Donna Sancia d'Aragon, breathed her last. She was interred in the convent of Santa Maria, under the name of Chiara, which name she had assumed when she took the veil.

A week after the old queen's funeral, Bertrand of Artois entered Joan's room, pale as death, his hair dishevelled, and in a state of indescribable agitation. Joan, in great terror, rushed toward her lover, inquiring by a look the cause of his trouble.

"I said truly, madame," cried the young count, pas-

sionately, "that you would ruin us all by obstinately refusing to listen to my advice."

"For pity's sake, Bertrand, say at once what has happened; what advice have I refused to follow?"

"My news, madame, is, that your noble husband, Andrea of Hungary, has been recognised by the court at Avignon, King of Naples and Jerusalem; and that from this time forth you are but his slave."

"You ravé, Count of Artois."

"I do not rave, madame; what I tell you is the very truth. The Pope's legates, who bring the bull of coronation, are ready at Capua; and if they do not enter the palace this evening, it is but to leave the new king time to make his preparations."

The queen staggered, as though a thunderbolt had burst at her feet.

"When I told you," continued the count, with increasing violence, "that force must be repelled by force, — that to break from the yoke of this infamous tyranny, it would be necessary to destroy this man before he had the means of destroying you, — you always recoiled, from childish fear and imbecile hesitation."

Joan cast upon her lover a tearful glance.

"My God! my God!" cried she, clasping her hands together despairingly, "must I, then, ever hear around me this fatal cry of death? And you, too, Bertrand, — you, in your turn, echo the sound, as well as Charles of Duras or Robert of Cabane! Enough of crimes. If my husband's ambition urges him to reign, let him; I will give him my power, provided he leaves me your love!"

"But are you sure that our love will have a long duration?"

"What do you mean, Bertrand? You take pleasure in torturing me."

"I say, madame, that the new king has ordered a black flag to be prepared, which will be carried before him on his coronation day."

"And you think," said Joan, turning as pale as a corpse, "you think this flag is intended as a menace?"

"A menace, the execution of which is already commenced."

The queen tottered, and held by the table to prevent herself from falling.

"Tell me all," she said, in a stifled voice; "do not fear terrifying me: see, I do not tremble. Oh, Bertrand, I implore you!"

"The traitors have begun with the man whom you esteem the most, — the wisest counsellor of the crown, the most just magistrate, the noblest heart, the most rigid virtue —"

"Andrea of Isemia!"

"Madame, he is no more!"

Joan uttered a scream, as if they had murdered before her eyes the noble old man whom she respected as a father; then, falling into a seat, she remained motionless and silent.

"How did they murder him?" she at length inquired.

"Yesterday evening, as he was leaving the palace to proceed to his own house, a man suddenly advanced toward him near the gate of Petrucia. This man is one of your husband's favourites, Conrad of Gottis, who was doubtless chosen on account of his having to complain of a sentence which the incorruptible magistrate had given against him, — that the murder might be set down to the score of private vengeance. The villain made a sign to two or three of his companions, who surrounded

their victim, shutting out all means of escape. The poor old man looked fixedly on his assassin, and inquired of him in a calm voice what he wanted. 'I want to lose you your life, as you lost me my cause,' cried the murderer, running him through the body with his sword. The remaining villains then threw themselves upon the unfortunate man, covered him with wounds, hideously mangled his corpse, and left it bathed in blood."

"Horror!" murmured the queen, covering her face with her hands.

"This is but their beginning, for the lists of proscription are full. Andrea must have blood to celebrate his accession to the throne of Naples. Do you know, Joan, who is at the head of the condemned?"

"Who?" inquired the queen, trembling from head to foot.

"Myself," answered the count, in a calm voice.

"You!" cried Joan, recovering her dignity, — "you they are about to slay! Oh, beware, Andrea, lest you pronounce your own doom. I have long turned aside the poniard which gleamed at your breast; beware that you do not exhaust my patience. Woe to thee, Prince of Hungary! the blood you have shed be on your own head."

So saying, the colour returned to her cheeks, her beautiful face glowed with the fire of vengeance, and her eyes shot forth lightnings. This child of sixteen was terrible to behold; she clasped her lover's hand with convulsive tenderness, and kept close at his side, as though she wished to defend him with her body.

"Your anger is awakened a little too late," continued the young count, in a melancholy voice; for Joan looked so beautiful at that moment that he had not the power

to reproach her. "Do you not know that his mother has left him a talisman, which protects him from poison or steel?"

"Nevertheless, he dies," replied Joan, in a firm voice; and the smile which passed over her face was so wild that the count, terrified in his turn, dropped his eyes upon the ground.

Upon the following day, the young Queen of Naples, more beautiful and fascinating than ever, was seated carelessly by a casement, from which the magnificent view of the bay was spread before her eyes, and was working with her delicate hands a rope of silk and gold. The sun was slowly sinking into the blue waters in which Pausilippo was reflected, with its ridge crowned with flowers and verdure. The mild and perfumed breeze, after having passed over the orange-groves of Sorrento and Amalfi, was wafting its delicious freshness to the inhabitants of Naples. The whole city had awakened from its noonday slumber; the mole was covered with a gay and countless multitude; and from all points of the vast amphitheatre there arose sounds of joy and festivity. Joan listened to these sounds with her head bent upon her work, and seemingly absorbed in deep thought. Suddenly, and at the moment when she seemed most occupied, the sound of suppressed breathing, and an almost imperceptible touch upon her shoulder, made her start. Turning round, she perceived it was her husband, magnificently dressed, and carelessly leaning upon the elbow of her chair. For some time past the prince had never approached his wife so familiarly. Andrea, without seeming to observe his wife's involuntary look of aversion and terror, and throwing into his cold and regular features as much affection as he could, smilingly asked: —

"Why are you making this fine rope, my dear and faithful wife?"

"To hang you with, signor!" answered the queen, also smiling.

Andrea shrugged his shoulders, seeing nothing but a joke in this reply. Then, seeing that Joan had again applied herself to her work, he attempted to renew the conversation.

"I confess," he continued, in a perfectly calm voice, "that my question was useless. I ought not to have doubted, from the hurry in which you are finishing your showy piece of work, that it is destined for some gallant cavalier, whom you mean to favour by allowing him to wear your colours upon some perilous enterprise. In that case, my fair sovereign, I implore a command from your mouth; name the time and place of the trial, and I am sure to carry away the prize from all your adorers."

"That is by no means certain," replied Joan, "if you are not more successful in war than in love." And she threw upon her husband a glance so contemptuous that the young man coloured up to the eyes.

"I trust," continued Andrea, containing himself, "soon to give you such proofs of my affection that you will no longer be able to doubt it."

"And what has given rise to your hope, signor?"

"I will tell you, if you will listen seriously."

"I do."

"Well, then! what has given me so great a confidence in the future is a dream which I had last night."

"A dream! that certainly deserves some explanation from you."

"I dreamt that there was a great fête in the town; an immense crowd filled the streets like an overflowing

torrent, and rent the sky with their shouts. The gloomy fronts of marble and granite had disappeared, concealed by silken hangings and garlands of flowers; the churches were prepared as for great solemnities. I was riding by your side."

Joan made a movement of disdain.

"Pardon, madame, it was but a dream: I rode, then, upon your right hand, upon a noble white horse, richly caparisoned, and the chief judge of the kingdom carried before me an unfurled flag, as a mark of honour. After triumphantly traversing the principal parts of the city, we arrived, to the sound of clarions and trumpets, at the royal church of Santa Chiara, in which your grandfather and my uncle are interred; and there the Pope's legate, after placing your hand in mine, pronounced a long discourse, and placed by turns the crowns of Jerusalem and Sicily upon our heads. The assembled nobles and people cried with one voice, 'Long live the King and Queen of Naples!' And in commemoration of so glorious a day, I conferred the honour of knighthood on some of the principal persons of the court."

"And have you no remembrance of the names of those chosen persons whom you esteemed worthy of your royal favours?"

"Perfectly, madame, perfectly: Bertrand of Artois —"

"Enough, signor; I can dispense with the names of the rest. I have ever believed you to be a generous and honourable prince; but you now give me new proofs, by letting your favours fall upon those persons whom I most honour with my confidence. I do not know whether your wishes are likely soon to be realised; but whether or not, rely upon my eternal gratitude."

Joan's voice did not show the least emotion; her look had become caressing, and a sweet smile played upon

her lips. But from this moment Andrea's death was resolved upon in her heart. The prince, too much occupied in his own projects of revenge, and confiding in the potency of his talisman and his own courage, had no suspicion that his schemes would be prevented. He conversed with his wife for some time, in a tone of gay and friendly gossip, endeavouring to draw her secrets from her, and hinting at his own by interrupted sentences and mysterious concealment. When he thought that every mark of resentment had vanished from Joan's brow, he invited her and her suite to accompany him to a magnificent hunting-party, which he was arranging for the 20th of August, — remarking that the queen's consent would be to him the token of their complete reconciliation and oblivion of the past. Joan accepted the invitation with captivating grace, and the prince retired, perfectly satisfied with his interview, with the conviction that he would but have to destroy the queen's favourites to bring her to obedience, if not to renew her love.

But upon the eve of the 20th of August, a strange and terrible scene took place within one of the lateral towers of the Castel-Nuovo. Charles of Duras, who had continued to brood over his infernal project, was informed by the notary, whom he had employed to watch the progress of the conspiracy, that upon that evening a definitive meeting was to take place. Shrouded in a black cloak, he entered a subterranean corridor, and, hidden behind a pillar, waited the issue of the conference. After two hours of anxious expectation, in which every second was marked by the beatings of his heart, Charles thought that he heard the noise of a door opening with great precaution; a feeble ray of light, proceeding from a lamp, quivered upon the arches

without dissipating the gloom, and a man walked toward him. Charles coughed slightly; it was the appointed signal. The man extinguished his light, and returned the dagger which he had drawn, fearing a surprise, into its sheath.

"Is it you, Nicolas?" inquired the duke, in a low voice.

"It is, monsignor."

"Well?"

"The prince's death is decided to take place to-morrow, as he goes to the hunt."

"Did you recognise all the conspirators?"

"I did, although their features were hidden by masks; I knew them by their voices as they pronounced the vote of death."

"Can you point them out to me?"

"Certainly, they will pass the bottom of this corridor immediately, — and, hold, there is Tommaso Pace walking in front, to light their way."

As he spoke, a tall figure, black from head to foot, with his face carefully concealed by a velvet mask, carrying a torch in his hand, crossed the corridor, and paused upon the first step of a winding staircase leading to the upper stories. The conspirators slowly followed, two by two, like a procession of spectres, appearing for a moment in the luminous circle thrown out by the torch, and then disappeared in the darkness.

"There go Charles and Bertrand of Artois," said the notary; "there the counts of Terlizzi and Catanzaro; there the grand admiral and seneschal of the kingdom; Godfrey of Marsan, Count of Squillace, and Robert of Cabane, Count of Eboli. Those two women conversing together, with so much gesticulation, are Catherine of Tarento, Empress of Constantinople, and Filippa the

Catanian, governess and first lady of the queen: there is Cancia, Joan's confidant, and there the Countess of Morcone."

The notary paused as a shadow glided past, walking alone, with eyes fixed upon the ground, arms hanging at her side, and stifling her sighs in the folds of her long black cloak.

"And who is this woman?" inquired the duke, grasping his companion's arm.

"That woman," murmured the notary, "is the queen!"

"Ah, she is mine!" thought Charles, drawing a long breath, with the deep satisfaction which Satan may be supposed to feel, when a long-coveted soul at length falls into his power.

"And now, your Excellency," said Nicolas, when all had once more sunk into darkness and silence: "if you have commanded me to watch the proceedings of the conspirators with the object of saving the young prince, whom you protect by your watchful friendship, hasten to do so, for to-morrow, perhaps, it will be too late."

"Follow me!" cried the duke, in an imperious tone; "the time has come for you to know my real intentions, that you may obey them with the most scrupulous exactness."

So saying, he hurried away in a direction opposite to that in which the conspirators had disappeared. The notary mechanically followed him through a maze of dark passages and concealed staircases, without being able to explain the sudden change which had taken place in his master's mind. As they were crossing one of the antechambers of the palace, they were met by Andrea, who accosted them gaily. The prince grasped

his cousin of Duras by the hand, with his accustomed friendship.

"Well, duke, do you go a-hunting with us to-morrow?"

"Excuse me, monsignor," answered Charles, with a deep obeisance; "it is utterly impossible for me to accompany you to-morrow, as my wife is very ill; but I beg you to accept my finest falcon."

And he gave the notary a look, which nailed him to the spot.

The morning of the 20th of August dawned, fair and serene. By break of day, masters and servants, knights and pages, princes and courtiers, were all on foot. The queen, on her appearance, was received on all sides with joyful cries. She was mounted upon a snow-white palfrey, and if she appeared paler than usual, it might be attributed to the early hour at which she had left her bed. Andrea, spurring forward one of the most fiery horses that he had ever subdued, cantered by his wife's side, happy in his strength, youth, and the thousand brilliant hopes which painted the future with the brightest colours. Never did the court of Naples display more splendour. All hate and mistrust seemed to have disappeared; and Friar Robert himself, when he saw this joyful cavalcade passing beneath his window, cleared his gloomy brow, and stroked his beard with satisfaction.

Andrea's intention was to pass several days in hunting between Capua and Aversa, and not to return to Naples until all was ready for his coronation. Accordingly, upon the first day, they hunted near Melito. Toward evening the court stopped for the night at Aversa; and as the town at this time contained no building worthy of receiving the queen, her husband, and their numerous suite, the convent of San Pietro-a-

Majello, built by Charles II. in the year 1309, was converted into a royal residence.

Whilst the grand seneschal was giving orders for the immediate preparation of apartments and supper for Andrea and his wife, the prince, who, during the day, had indulged in his favourite pastime with all the ardour of youth, mounted a terrace to breathe the evening air, accompanied by his nurse Isolda, who, loving him as a mother, was never separated from him. The prince had never before appeared so animated and cheerful; he extolled the beauty of the country, the ethereal blue of the sky, and the perfume of the plants; he overwhelmed his nurse with a thousand questions, without allowing her the trouble of answering them. He told her with enthusiasm of a terrible wild boar, which he had that morning pursued through the woods, and stretched foaming at his feet. Isolda interrupted him to warn him that there was a grain of dust in his eye. Andrea was forming brilliant projects for the future, and Isolda remarked tenderly, while caressing him, that he must be very much fatigued. Andrea good-naturedly scolded her for these continual interruptions; and then, allowing a tender melancholy to steal insensibly over him, he told a thousand stories, — anecdotes of his infancy; spoke for a long time of his brother Louis, of his absent mother; and a tear rose to his eye when he recalled her last farewell. Isolda heard him with joy, answered all his questions naturally; but her heart was agitated by no dark presentiments; for although the poor woman loved Andrea with her whole soul, still she was not his mother.

When all was ready, Robert of Cabane came to inform the prince that the queen expected him; Andrea cast one last look upon the smiling landscape, which night

was rapidly covering beneath its sable veil, and after pressing his nurse's hand to his heart and lips, he slowly and sadly followed the grand seneschal. But in a short time the lights illuminating the salon, the rapid circulation of the wines, the cheerful conversation, and the exciting stories of the day's sport, dissipated the cloud of sadness which had settled upon the prince's brow. The queen alone, with her elbows leaning upon the table, her eyes fixed, her lips motionless, sat in the midst of this strange feast, cold and pale, like a spectre summoned from the tomb to disturb the joy of the guests.

Andrea, whose reason began to yield to his copious libations of wine, took umbrage at his wife's face, filled a glass to the brim, and presented it to the queen. Joan trembled violently, and her lips moved with convulsive agitation; but the conspirators drowned by their loud voices the involuntary groan which burst from her breast. In the midst of the festivity, Robert of Cabane proposed that the same wines which were used at the royal table should be copiously distributed amongst the Hungarian soldiers who were guarding the avenues to the convent, and this extravagant proposition was received with drunken applause.

In a short time the shouts of the soldiers, by way of gratitude for such unexpected generosity, became mingled with the noise of the guests. To complete the prince's intoxication, there arose from all parts the cry of "Long live the Queen! — long live his Majesty the King of Naples!"

These orgies were kept up during the greater part of the night. The guests spoke with enthusiasm of the pleasure they expected the next day, and Bertrand of Artois remarked, in an audible voice, that, after so late a carousal, it was probable that some of the party would

not be ready at the appointed time. Andrea declared that, as for him, one or two hours' repose was quite sufficient to dispel his fatigue, and that he fervently hoped that his example would be followed by the rest of the company. The Count of Terlizzi respectfully expressed some doubts as to the prince's punctuality. Andrea, after having challenged everybody present to beat him if they could, retired with his wife to the apartments prepared for them, where he was soon buried in sleep.

About two o'clock in the morning Tommaso Pace, the prince's valet and first groom of the chamber, knocked at his master's door, as if to call him to rise. At the first knock all remained silent: at the second, Joan, who during the night had not closed her eyes, made a movement as if to save her husband, and to warn him of his danger; at the third, the unfortunate young man suddenly awoke. Hearing sounds like suppressed laughter in the next room, and believing that they were making a jest of his laziness, he leapt from his bed, and partially dressing himself in haste, opened the door. For what followed we shall quote literally the account given of the murder by Domenico Gravina, one of the most esteemed chroniclers of that period.

Immediately upon the prince's appearance all the conspirators flew upon him, in order to strangle him with their hands; for he could not be slain by steel or poison, owing to the amulet which his poor mother had given him. But Andrea, being strong and active, and instantly understanding their infamous purpose, defended himself with supernatural vigour, and, uttering horrible cries, he disengaged himself from the grasp of his murderers, his face bleeding and his hair torn out by the roots.

The unfortunate young man endeavoured to regain his room, to arm himself, and resist his assassins to the last: but, when he had nearly reached the door, the notary, Nicolas de Melazzo, thrusting his dagger into the staples of the lock, in the manner of a bolt, prevented his entrance. The prince, imploring protection from those who remained faithful to him, returned to the salon, but all the doors were locked, and no one held out a succouring hand. The queen remained silent, without showing any concern whatever. But Isolda, the nurse, alarmed by the cries of her dear son and master, leaped from her bed, and running to the window of her room, she filled the house with the most frightful screams.

The traitors, terrified by the noise she made, although the place was isolated, and so completely separated from the town that no one could come to his assistance, were disposed to let their victim go, when Bertrand of Artois, feeling himself more guilty than the rest, excited by demoniacal fury, seized the prince round the body, and, after a desperate resistance, felled him to the ground; then, dragging him by the hair of the head to a balcony which looked out upon the gardens, and placing his knee upon his victim's breast, "This way, barons!" he cried, "I have something to strangle him with!" — and, after a desperate struggle, he succeeded in passing a long rope, made of silk and gold, round the unfortunate man's neck. Drawing the knot tight, the other traitors threw him over the parapet of the balcony, and left him hanging between heaven and earth until death ensued. As the Count of Terlizzi turned his eyes away from his expiring agonies, Robert of Cabane cried imperiously to him: —

"What are you doing there, my brother-in-law?

The rope is long enough for us all to hold the end. We must have accomplices and not witnesses."

As soon as the last struggles of the dying man had ceased, they let the corpse fall to the ground, from the height of three stories, and opening the doors of the salon, they went out as if nothing had happened.

Isolda, having at last procured a light, quickly ran up to the queen's apartment, and finding the door locked from within, she called her son loudly. There was no answer, although the queen was in the room. The poor nurse, frantic with fear and agitation, rushed through the passages, awoke the monks one by one, imploring them to assist her in seeking the prince. The monks answered that they had indeed heard a noise, but, believing that it proceeded from some quarrel among the drunken soldiery, they did not think it necessary to interfere. Isolda implored them still more earnestly; the alarm spread through the convent; the monks, preceded by the nurse carrying a light, went in search of the cause of the disturbance. She entered the garden, observed something white among the bushes, advanced trembling toward it, uttered a dreadful scream, and sunk upon the ground. The unfortunate Andrea lay bathed in his blood, the rope round his neck, and his head crushed by the fall. Upon this discovery, two monks went up to the queen's apartment, and, knocking respectfully at the door, inquired of her in a sepulchral voice, —

"What does your Majesty wish to have done with the corpse of your husband?"

The queen returned no answer; and the monks slowly descended to the garden, and kneeling down, one at the head and the other at the feet of the corpse, they commenced reciting the penitential psalms. When they

had prayed an hour, two more monks went to Joan's room, and having repeated the same question with the same result, they took the place of the two former monks, and prayed in their turn. Finally a third couple presented themselves at the door, and returned in great consternation with the same success as the others.

The people assembled round the convent, and cries and execrations began to proceed from the indignant multitude. The multitude increased in numbers and violence, and at last showed signs of attacking the royal residence; when suddenly the queen's guard appeared, with their lances in rest; and a litter carefully closed, and surrounded by the principal nobility of the court, passed through the amazed multitude. Joan, covered with a black veil, returned to the Castel-Nuovo, surrounded by her escort; and from that time, say the historians, no one dared to speak of this murder.

But the terrible part which Charles of Duras had to play, began immediately upon the consummation of the crime. The duke permitted the corpse of the man whom the Pope had named King of Sicily and Jerusalem to lie for two days exposed to the wind and rain, that the horrible sight might augment the indignation of the people. Upon the third day, he had it carried with the greatest pomp to the cathedral of Naples, and, assembling all the Hungarians around the funeral bier, he cried in a voice of thunder: —

"Nobles and Commoners, behold our king, basely strangled by infamous traitors. God will sooner or later acquaint us with the names of all the culprits. Let those, then, who wish justice to be done, hold up their hands, swearing bloody, implacable, and eternal revenge against the accursed murderers."

There was one tremendous cry, which carried death

and desolation into the hearts of the conspirators; and the people dispersed into the town, shouting, "Vengeance! vengeance!"

Divine justice, which knows no distinction of rank, and does not pause even before a crown, fell first upon Joan, in her love. When the guilty pair met for the first time after the murder, they were seized with mutual hatred and disgust. They recoiled in terror from each other; the queen saw before her only her husband's murderer; and Bertrand saw in the queen the cause of his crime, and perhaps of his future punishment. Bertrand's features were distorted, his cheeks sunk, his eyes surrounded by livid circles, his lips compressed; and his arms and hands extended toward his accomplice, in whom he imagined he saw a frightful vision. The same rope which he had used in strangling Andrea, he imagined was now around the queen's neck, and drawn so tightly that it entered her flesh; and some invisible power, some Satanic inspiration urged him to strangle with his own hands the woman whom he had so desperately loved. The count rushed from the room with gestures of despair and inarticulate words; as he began to show symptoms of madness, his father, Charles of Artois, hurried him away, and the same evening they set out for their estates of Santa Agatha, which they fortified against attack.

But Joan's slow and dreadful punishment was but beginning, — a punishment which was to last thirty-seven years, and then be terminated by a frightful death. One by one, all the wretches who had had a hand in Andrea's death presented themselves before her to demand the price of blood. The Catanian and her son, who now held in their hands not only the honour, but also the life of their sovereign, redoubled their

grasping audacity. Cancia set no bounds to her disorders: and the Empress of Constantinople demanded that her niece should marry her eldest son, Robert, Prince of Tarento.

Joan, torn by remorse, devoured with indignation, humbled by the arrogance of her subjects, without courage to retaliate, and overcome by shame, descended to entreaties, and stooped so far as to ask a few days' delay. The empress consented, upon condition that her son should take up his abode at the Castel-Nuovo, and be permitted to see the queen once every day. Joan submitted in silence, and Robert of Tarento became an inmate of the palace.

Charles of Duras, on his part, being by the death of Andrea almost the head of the family, and, in the event of Joan's dying without legitimate offspring, being by the old king's will, by right of his wife, Maria, heir to the throne, intimated two commands to the queen: in the first place, that she should contract no new marriage without first consulting him on the choice of the husband; and, secondly, that she should immediately invest him with the title of Duke of Calabria; and, to compel his cousin to this double sacrifice, he signified to her that if she were imprudent enough to refuse him either of his demands, he would place in the hands of justice the proofs of the crime and the names of the murderers.

Joan submitted to this new misfortune, seeing no means of avoiding it; but Catherine, who alone was capable of opposing her nephew, replied that the ambition and the hopes of the Duke of Duras might be destroyed by representing to him at once — as was indeed the truth — that the queen was *enceinte;* and if, in spite of this intelligence, he still persisted in his

schemes, in that case she would undertake to discover some means of sowing discord and trouble in her nephew's family, to wound him either in his affections or in his dearest interests, to dishonour him publicly in the persons of his wife and mother.

Charles smiled coldly when his aunt announced to him, on the part of the queen, that she was about to give birth to a child of Andrea's. Indeed, what importance could an unborn child have in the eyes of a man who had rid himself with such admirable coolness, even by the hands of his enemies, of persons who had crossed him in his path? He answered that the happy intelligence which the empress had announced to him, far from diminishing his indulgence to his cousin, induced him, on the contrary, to show her more kindness and attention; that, therefore, he would reiterate his proposition, and also renew his promise, if it was agreed to, not to pursue his revenge for the murder of his dear Andrea. He cunningly contrived to make Catherine of Tarento understand that, she too having had a hand in the prince's death, it would be her own interest to advise the queen to prevent the proceedings which her refusal would occasion.

The empress was deeply affected by the threatening attitude assumed by her nephew, and promised him to do all in her power to persuade the queen to grant him what he demanded, upon condition that Charles should give her the necessary time to conduct so delicate a negotiation. But Catherine profited by the delay which she had drawn from the Duke of Duras's ambition, to meditate her revenge and assure herself of certain success. After several plans, eagerly thought of and reluctantly abandoned, she resolved upon such an infernal and unheard-of project, that the mind would refuse to

believe its truth if it were not attested by all the historians.

Agnes of Duras had been suffering for some time past from a mysterious languor, probably occasioned, in some degree, by her son's restless and turbulent disposition. It was upon this unfortunate mother that the empress resolved to deal the first strokes of her hatred. She held counsel with the Count of Terlizzi and his mistress, Cancia, which last-mentioned person, by order of the queen, attended Agnes during her illness; and it was resolved that hints should be thrown out to Charles of Duras, accusing his mother of being with child.

The Count of Terlizzi, who, since the part he had taken in the regicide, trembled in case he should be denounced, made no opposition to the wishes of the empress; and Cancia, whose head was as light as her heart was depraved, caught with foolish gaiety at the opportunity of revenging herself upon the prudery of a princess of the blood, who alone remained virtuous in the midst of a general dissoluteness.

Assured of the consent and discretion of her accomplices, Catherine began to circulate vague reports, but which, if confirmed by proof, were of dreadful importance; and in a short time the perfidious accusation, whispered from ear to ear, reached that of Charles of Duras.

Seized with convulsive trembling when this shocking intelligence was first made known to him, the duke immediately summoned the physician of the household, and demanded sternly what was the cause of his mother's illness. The physician (who had been practised upon by the most detestable means, until he himself was convinced of the truth of the accusation) turned pale and hesitated; but, upon being pressed by Charles's threats, he confessed that he had sufficient grounds of suspicion

to believe the duchess to be with child; but, before deciding upon so grave a question, as he might possibly be mistaken, he asked leave to make a second observation. The next day, immediately upon the physician's coming from Agnes's apartment, he was met by the duke, who, after having questioned him by an agonised gesture, understood, by the dead silence which followed, that his fears were too well grounded. But the physician, anxious to proceed with caution, requested leave to make one more observation. On the third day the doctor affirmed, upon his soul and conscience, that Agnes of Duras was with child.

"It is well," said Charles, dismissing the physician, without showing any emotion.

The same evening, a medicine, which the physician had ordered, was taken by the duchess, and in the course of half an hour she was attacked by the most violent pains. The duke was informed of her illness, that other advice might be taken, as the prescription of the usual physician, instead of easing the patient, had only increased her illness.

Charles slowly ascended to his mother's apartment, and sending away all the persons round the bedside, pretending that by their awkwardness they only increased the patient's sufferings, he was left alone with her. Poor Agnes, forgetting the tortures she was suffering, grasped his hand tenderly, and smiled through her tears.

Charles, his forehead bathed with a cold sweat, his face of a livid colour, and his eyeballs fearfully dilated, bent over the sick woman, and inquired of her in a gloomy voice, —

"Well, my mother, do you feel any better?"

"Oh, my poor Charles, I suffer! I suffer fearfully! I feel as though my veins were running with molten

lead. Oh, my son! send for your brothers, that I may give them my last blessing, for I cannot much longer endure this agony. I burn! oh, for pity's sake, send for a physician; I am poisoned!"

Charles did not move.

"Some water!" continued the dying woman, in an interrupted voice, "some water! a physician! a confessor! my children, — I would see my children!"

Charles remained motionless, in gloomy silence, and his mother, in the midst of her sufferings, believing that grief had deprived her son of the powers of speech and motion, raised herself by a desperate effort, and holding him by the arm, she cried with all her remaining strength, "Charles, my son! what ails you? Compose yourself, poor child; this will be nothing, at least I trust so; but quick, send for assistance, summon my physician. Oh, you can form no conception of what I suffer!"

"Your physician," answered Charles, in a slow and cold voice, each word of which pierced to his mother's soul, like the stroke of a dagger, "your physician cannot come."

"And why?"

"Because he who possesses the secret of our honour, cannot live."

"Wretch!" cried the dying woman, in the height of terror and pain, "you have murdered him! you have perhaps poisoned your mother! O Charles! Charles! God have mercy upon your soul!"

"It is you who have compelled me," answered Charles, in a deep voice; "it is you who have urged me on to crime and despair; it is you who are the cause of my dishonour in this world, and of my perdition in the next."

"What mean you? In pity, Charles, do not let me die in this fearful uncertainty. What fatal mistake is blinding you? Speak, speak, my son; I do not now feel the poison which is destroying me. What have I done? Of what am I accused?"

And she cast upon her son a haggard look, in which maternal love still struggled against the dreadful thought that she saw her murderer. Then, seeing that Charles remained mute, in spite of her entreaties, she repeated with a piercing shriek: —

"Speak! in Heaven's name, speak, before I die!"

"Mother, you are with child!"

"I," cried Agnes, in tones that went to his heart, "God, pardon him! — as his dying mother pardons and blesses him."

Charles fell upon her neck, shouting for help, in a despairing voice. He would now have saved her life at the price of his own; but it was too late. He uttered one thrilling cry, and was found stretched upon his mother's corpse.

Strange commentaries were raised at the court upon the death of the Duchess of Duras, and the disappearance of her physician; and no one could avoid noticing the increased melancholy which deepened the furrows upon Charles's gloomy brow. Catherine alone guessed the terrible cause of her nephew's melancholy; for it was evident to her that at one blow the duke had murdered his physician, and poisoned his mother. But she had not expected so sudden and violent a reaction in the heart of a man who would not recoil from any crime. She believed Charles capable of everything excepting remorse. This settled sadness seemed to her to be a bad omen for the success of her schemes. She had wished to raise domestic troubles in her nephew's breast, that

he might not have the time to set himself in opposition to her son's marriage with the queen; but she had overshot her mark; and Charles, being by one terrible step fairly entered upon the path of crime, having dashed to pieces the holiest affections, threw himself back upon his evil passions, with feverish ardour and an eager thirst for revenge.

Catherine then endeavoured to gain her object by submission. She made her son understand that the only means by which he could still obtain the queen's hand was to flatter Charles's ambition, and to put himself, after a manner, under his patronage. Robert of Tarento saw his position and ceased paying his court to Joan, who received his addresses with coldness, to attach himself to his cousin. He showed him all the deference and respect which Charles himself had formerly pretended for Andrea, when he had first thought of his destruction. But the Duke of Duras was not to be duped by sentiments of friendship and devotion from the eldest son of the house of Tarento; and while showing himself moved by so unexpected a return, he kept himself carefully on his guard against Robert's solicitations.

But an event, beyond all human foresight, completely overthrew the calculations of the two cousins. One day, as they were riding out together on horseback, their usual custom since their hypocritical reconciliation, Louis of Tarento, Robert's youngest brother, who had always loved Joan with artless and chivalrous affection, and who, keeping himself aloof from his family's infamous conspiracy, had not stained his hands with Andrea's blood, transported by some strange frenzy, presented himself suddenly at the gates of the Castel-Nuovo; and while his brother was wasting his precious moments in obtaining the consent to his marriage, he

ordered the drawbridge to be raised, and commanded the soldiers to open to no one. Then, without troubling himself for an instant with Charles's rage or Robert's jealousy, he rushed into the queen's apartment.

Returning from his ride, Robert of Tarento was astonished to find that the bridge was not lowered to admit him. He called loudly for the soldiers who guarded the fortress, threatening them with severe punishments for their unpardonable negligence; but, finding that the gates remained closed, and that the soldiers showed no signs of repentance or fear, the prince got into a furious rage, swearing he would hang the wretches like dogs, who dared to prevent his entrance into his own residence.

The Empress of Constantinople, terrified at the prospect of the bloody quarrel which she saw would inevitably ensue between the two brothers, advanced alone and on foot to her son, and using her maternal ascendency, after entreating him to repress his fury in the presence of the crowd, which had already collected to witness the strange sight, related to him, in a low voice, all that had taken place during his absence. Robert burst into a fit of frantic rage; and, having exhausted himself in curses and imprecations on his brother's head, galloped furiously from the gate, to inform the Duke of Duras, whom he had just left, of the outrage, and to excite him to revenge.

Charles was conversing carelessly with his young wife, who was little accustomed to such familiarity, when the Prince of Tarento, breathless with haste and agitation, burst into the room, to tell his incredible tale. Charles made him repeat it, as he could not believe in the possibility of so audacious an enterprise. Passing suddenly from doubt to rage, and striking his forehead with his iron gantlet, he cried that since the queen set him at

defiance, he would soon make her tremble in her own palace and in her lover's arms: and, casting a frowning glance at Maria, who was imploring him with tears for her sister, he grasped Robert's hand, and promised that so long as he lived Louis should never be Joan's husband.

The same evening Charles shut himself up in his cabinet, and despatched letters to the court of Avignon, the results of which were not long in manifesting themselves. A bull, dated the 2nd of June, 1346, was addressed to Bertram des Baux, Count of Monte-Scaglioso, chief judge of the kingdom of Sicily, with orders to put in motion the most rigorous proceedings against Andrea's murderers, and to visit them with the severest punishment. Nevertheless, a secret note was attached to this bull, which was in direct contradiction to Charles's schemes, — the sovereign pontiff expressly commanding the chief judge not to implicate the queen or the princes of the blood in the proceedings, as such a step would give rise to great troubles; reserving to himself, in his character of supreme head of the Church and superior of the kingdom, the right of trying them at such time as his prudence should think fit.

Bertram des Baux made solemn preparations for this terrible trial. A platform was erected in the great hall of justice, and all the officers of the crown and the dignitaries of the State had seats behind the bench appropriated to the judges. Three days after the publication of Clement IV.'s bull in the capital, the chief judge was prepared to begin the public examination of two of the accused. The two culprits who had first fallen into the hands of the law were, as may easily be imagined, those whose condition was the least elevated, and whose lives were of the smallest value, — Tommaso

Pace and Nicolas de Melazzo. They were brought before the tribunal, to be, according to custom, previously put to torture. As they were conducted under a guard to the court, the notary passed by Charles's side in the street, and had time to whisper to him, —

"Monsignor, the hour is come to render my life for you; I shall do my duty; I leave my wife and children to your care."

And, encouraged by a nod from his protector, he walked on with a firm step and deliberate air.

The chief judge, after proving the identity of the accused, delivered them over to the executioner and his assistants, to be tortured in the public square, as a spectacle as well as an example to the multitude. But one of the accused, Tommaso Pace, upon being fastened to the fatal rope, declared, to the great disappointment of the crowd, that he would confess all, and demanded to be once more taken before the judges. At these words, the Count of Terlizzi, who was watching with mortal anxiety the slightest gestures of the prisoners, made a desperate attempt to save himself from the dreaded disclosure. As Tommaso Pace, his hands bound behind his back, escorted by two guards, and followed by the notary, was led back to the hall of justice, the count, by using the authority of his rank, had him taken into a solitary house, and, grasping him strongly by the throat until his tongue protruded from his mouth, he cut it off with a razor.

The shrieks of the unfortunate man, thus cruelly mutilated, reached the ear of the Duke of Duras; he entered the room in which this barbarous deed had been done, and from which the Count of Terlizzi was at that moment departing, and approached the notary, who, without showing the slightest signs of emotion or fear,

had been the spectator of this frightful sight. Nicolas de Melazzo, believing that the same fate was reserved for him, turned calmly toward the duke, and said to him with a melancholy smile: —

"Monsignor, the precaution is useless: you will have no need of depriving me of my tongue, as the noble count has deprived my poor comrade of his. They may tear my flesh to pieces without drawing a single word from my mouth. I have promised your Excellency, and you have, as guarantees, the life of my wife and the fortunes of my children."

"It is not silence I require of you," answered the duke, in a deep voice; "on the contrary, you may rid me of all my enemies at once by your revelations, and I command you to denounce them to the tribunal."

The notary bent his head with melancholy resignation; then starting suddenly in great terror, he made a step toward the duke, and murmured in a stifled voice, —

"And the queen?"

"They would not believe you if you dared to denounce her; but when Filippa and her son, when Terlizzi and his wife, when those who are most familiar with her are accused by you, and put to the torture, they will denounce her unanimously."

"I understand you, monsignor; my life alone does not content you, you must also have my soul. It is well; once again I recommend my children to you."

And he walked toward the tribunal with a deep sigh. The chief judge put the usual questions to Tommaso Pace; and a shudder of horror ran through the assembly, at the despairing gesture made by the wretched man as he opened his bleeding mouth. But astonishment and terror was at its height when Nicolas de

Melazzo, in a slow and firm voice, named, one after the other, Andrea's murderers, with the exception of the queen and the princes of the blood, and gave a minute account of the assassination in all its details.

Robert of Cabane and the counts of Terlizzi and Morcone, who were in the hall, and who dared not make the slightest defence, were immediately arrested. A short time afterward Filippa, her two daughters, and Cancia joined them in prison, after vainly imploring the protection of the queen. As to Charles and Bertrand of Artois, shut up in their fortress of Santa Agatha, they set the law at defiance. Besides these, several other conspirators, among whom were the counts of Mileto and Catanzaro, escaped by flight.

Immediately upon Nicolas declaring that he had nothing more to confess, and that he had told the tribunal the exact and entire truth, the chief judge immediately pronounced his sentence, in the midst of the deepest silence. Tommaso Pace and the notary were each fastened to a horse's tail, and after being dragged in this manner through the principal streets of the town, they were hanged upon the gallows.

The other prisoners were thrown into a dungeon, to be interrogated and tortured upon the following day, and as they were all confined in the same place, they began to exchange mutual reproaches, each pretending to have been seduced to the crime by the rest. Cancia alone, whose strange spirit was not depressed, even by the prospect of torture or death, interrupted the complaints of her companions by a startling burst of laughter, and cried gaily: —

"Why such bitter recriminations and discourteous contradictions, my friends? We have no possible excuse, and we are all equally guilty. As for me, who

am the youngest of the party, and if these ladies will allow me to say so, not the ugliest, if I am condemned I shall die contented, and you had much better do the same. Let us have no more complaints and lamentations, which are really very tiresome, and let us prepare to die as joyously as we have lived."

So saying, she yawned carelessly, and, throwing herself upon the straw, slept as calmly as if she had been innocent and happy.

Next morning by daybreak, an immense crowd assembled upon the seashore. A palisade had been erected during the night, to keep the people at such a distance that they might see the criminals without hearing them. Charles of Duras, at the head of a brilliant retinue of knights and attendants, mounted upon a superb horse, and dressed in deep mourning, took his station close to the enclosure. His face glowed with ferocious joy when the criminals, two by two, with their wrists bound together, passed through the crowd; for the duke expected every moment to hear them denounce the queen. But the chief judge had prudently prevented any indiscretion of this kind by running a fish-hook through their tongues.

The wretches were tortured upon the mast of a galley, without a single word of confession escaping them. Joan, notwithstanding the injuries which most of her accomplices had done her, feeling her pity awakened for the woman whom she had respected as a mother, for the companions of her infancy, and perhaps some lingering love for Robert of Cabane, sent two messengers to Bertram de Baux, to implore him to pardon the culprits; but the chief judge seized upon the queen's envoys, put them to the torture, and, upon their confessing that they had taken part, like the rest, in Andrea's murder,

condemned them to the same punishment as the others. Donna Cancia alone, on account of her condition, escaped the torture, and the execution of her sentence was deferred.

As she was returning to prison, smiling upon the handsomest cavaliers she could distinguish in the crowd, she passed Charles of Duras, and as her tongue had not been pierced like the rest, she beckoned him to approach her, and spoke to him in a low voice.

Charles grew pale, and, laying his hand upon his sword, he cried fiercely, —

"Wretch!"

"You forget, monsignor, that I am under the protection of the law."

"Oh, my mother! my poor mother!" murmured Charles, in a stifled voice, and fell senseless to the ground.

On the following day the people, assembled earlier than before, demanded their prey with loud cries. All the regular troops of which the judicial authorities had the disposal were posted in the streets, to stem the torrent. That instinct of innate cruelty which too often degrades human nature was fully aroused in the populace; the blindness of hatred and the thirst for blood had driven them to frenzy; groups of men and women, howling like wild beasts, threatened to pull down the prison walls if the criminals were not brought out to punishment; and one continued roar, like the growling of thunder, struck terror into the queen's heart.

But, notwithstanding Bertram de Baux's good-will to comply with the popular wishes, the preparations for this dreadful execution were not concluded until almost noon, when the sun was shining upon the town with insupportable heat. An enormous cry, proceeding from

ten thousand panting breasts, was raised, when the rumour spread through the crowd that the condemned were about to be brought to punishment, which instantly sunk into silence as the gates of the prison slowly turned upon their rusty hinges. A treble rank of horsemen, with visors down and lances in rest, headed the procession; after which, in the midst of howling and curses, the condemned were brought out, each extended upon a cart, bound, and naked to the waist, between two executioners, whose duty it was to torture them on the way. In the first cart lay the old Catanian washerwoman, wife of the grand seneschal, and governess of the queen, Filippa of Cabane; and the two executioners, who were placed at her right and left, were lashing her with so much fury that her blood left a long trace in all the streets through which they passed.

Immediately after their mother, followed, in separate carts, the countesses of Terlizzi and Morcone, the elder of whom was but nineteen years of age. These two sisters were so beautiful that a cry of astonishment was raised by the multitude, who gloated with brutal eyes on the sight of barbarities too horrible for description.

Robert of Cabane, grand seneschal of the kingdom, the counts of Terlizzi and Morcone, Raymond Pace, the brother of the valet who had been executed two days before, and several other prisoners, followed in the same manner, in carts, while they were likewise scourged with cords, flayed with razors, and torn with red-hot pincers.

In the middle of the Piazzo di San Eligio an immense pile had been raised, to which the victims were carried; and their mutilated bodies were cast into the flames. The Count of Terlizzi and the Catanian still lived, and tears rolled from the unfortunate mother's eyes when

she saw the body of her son and palpitating remains of her two daughters cast into the flames, and knew from their frightful cries that their sufferings were not over. Suddenly a tremendous noise drowned the groans of the victims; the enclosure was forced, and the palisades thrown down by the mob, who, rushing like maniacs to the gibbet, armed with swords, hatchets, and knives, drew from the flames the dead or living bodies of the condemned, hacked them to pieces, and carried away their bones, in memory of that fearful day.

The sight of these dreadful punishments had not satisfied Charles of Duras's vengeance. Seconded by the chief judge, he every day caused new executions, and in a short time Andrea's death was but a pretext to exterminate, legally, all persons who opposed his designs. But Louis of Tarento, who was now soliciting the necessary dispensations to legitimise his marriage, regarding these acts of high jurisdiction in the light of personal affronts to the queen, and exercised against her will and in direct violation of her rights, armed his adherents, and, increasing his band with all the adventurers who would join his standard, he was soon at the head of a force sufficient to defend his party and resist the encroachments of his cousin. Naples was now divided into two hostile camps, who came to blows with each other upon the slightest pretence; and these daily skirmishes were always followed by some scene of death or pillage.

But in order to supply the wants of these mercenary soldiers, and to keep up the intestine struggle with the Duke of Duras and his brother Robert, Louis of Tarento needed money, and he discovered that the queen's coffers were empty. Joan relapsed into despair, and her lover, generous and brave as he was, was compelled to

comfort her as well as he could, without well knowing himself how to surmount this difficulty. But his mother, Catherine, whose ambition was satisfied with seeing one of her sons, no matter which, upon the throne of Naples, came unexpectedly to their assistance, and promised solemnly within a few days to put her niece in possession of a treasure which, queen as she was, she had never even dreamt of.

The empress, taking with her the half of her son's troops, marched upon Santa Agatha, and laid siege to the fortress in which Charles and Bertrand of Artois had taken refuge to avoid the pursuit of justice. The old count, thunderstruck at the approach of this woman, who had been the soul of the conspiracy, and unable to understand the meaning of her hostile march, sent messengers to her to inquire, in his name, the meaning of this display of military force. Catherine replied in the following words, which we translate literally: —

"My dear friends, carry back to Charles, our faithful ally, the message that we desire to speak with him privately upon a matter of equal interest to us both, and that he need feel no alarm at seeing us arrive in arms, for this has been purposely done, for a reason which we will explain to him at our meeting. We are aware that he is confined to his bed with the gout; we are not, therefore, surprised that he cannot come to meet us. Hasten then to salute him from us, and tell him that if such is his good pleasure, we request leave to enter his territory, accompanied by Signor Nicolas Acciajuoli, our ordinary councillor, and only ten of our soldiers, to converse with him upon an important subject, which cannot be trusted to messengers."

Recovered from his surprise, after such frank and friendly explanations, Charles of Artois sent his son

Bertrand to meet the empress, to receive her with all the respect due to her rank, and her high position at the Neapolitan court. Catherine entered the castle with marks of sincere pleasure, and after inquiring after the count's health, apparently with the most cordial friendship, being left alone with him, lowering her voice with a mysterious air, she explained to him that the object of her visit was to consult his experience upon the affairs of Naples, and to solicit his active co-operation in favour of the queen; but as nothing of importance obliged her to quit Santa Agatha, she would await the re-establishment of the count's health, to profit by his advice, and to acquaint him with the events which had taken place during his absence from the court. She at length succeeded so well in gaining the confidence, and dissipating the suspicions of the old man, that he begged her to honour his castle with her presence as long as her affairs would permit her, and received by degrees within his walls the whole troop which had accompanied her. This was what Catherine had been waiting for. The same day on which her whole force was admitted into Santa Agatha, she entered the count's room with an angry air, followed by four soldiers, and, seizing the old man by the throat, —

"Wretched traitor!" she cried in a severe voice, "think not to escape from our hands until you have received the chastisement which you deserve. Instantly point out to me the place where your treasure is concealed, if you do not wish your wretched body to be thrown to feed the ravens."

The count, almost choked, and with a dagger glittering at his breast, did not even endeavour to cry for aid. He fell upon his knees, and implored the empress at least to spare his son's life, who was not yet recovered

from the gloomy melancholy which had disturbed his reason ever since the horrible catastrophe; and, dragging himself reluctantly to the place where his treasure was concealed, he pointed it out to the empress, repeating, with tears and sighs, —

"Take everything, my wealth and my life, but save my son!"

Catherine could not conceal her joy at seeing before her vases of exquisite workmanship and prodigious value, caskets of pearls, diamonds and rubies of inestimable worth, and coffers filled with ingots of gold. But when the old man, in a trembling voice, insisted upon obtaining his son's liberty as a recompense for his life and fortune, the empress, resuming her pitiless coldness, replied sternly: —

"I have already given orders to have your son brought before me; but prepare yourself to bid him farewell for ever, for he is about to be taken to the fortress of Melfi, and you, in all probability, will end your days in the dungeons of the castle of Santa Agatha."

Such was the poor count's grief at this violent separation from his son that a few days afterward he was found dead in his dungeon. As to Bertrand, he did not survive him long. Completely losing his reason upon the intelligence of his father's death, he hung himself from his prison bars. Thus did Andrea's murderers destroy each other, like beasts of prey enclosed in the same cage.

Catherine of Tarento, carrying with her the treasure which she had thus honourably obtained, arrived at the court of Naples in great triumph, and meditating vast schemes. But new misfortunes had taken place during her absence. Charles of Duras, after having summoned the queen, for the last time, to give him up the duchy of

Calabria, — a title which belonged to the heir-apparent to the throne, — enraged at her refusal, wrote to Louis of Hungary, inviting him to take possession of the kingdom, engaging himself to assist him in the enterprise with all his forces, and to give him up the principal authors of his brother's death, who hitherto had escaped the hands of justice.

The King of Hungary eagerly accepted this offer, and raised an army to avenge Andrea's death, and march to the conquest of Naples. His mother's tears and the counsels of Friar Robert, who had taken refuge at Buda, confirmed him in his projects of revenge. He had already complained bitterly to the court of Avignon that, after having punished the minor assassins, they had allowed the principal culprit to continue in security, who, already stained with her husband's blood, continued her debauched and adulterous life. The Pope replied that, as far as the matter depended upon him, he would not have failed to give satisfaction to legitimate complaints; but that the accusation must in the first place be clearly drawn up and supported by proper evidence; that undoubtedly Joan's conduct had been highly blamable during her husband's life and after his death; but that his Majesty ought to consider that the Church of Rome, seeking above all things for truth and justice, always acted with the greatest circumspection; and that, especially in a matter of such deep importance, it was impossible for it to judge merely by appearances.

Joan, upon her part, terrified by these warlike preparations, despatched ambassadors to the Florentine republic, to justify herself from the crime imputed to her by public opinion, and even ventured to endeavour to excuse herself to the Hungarian court; but Andrea's brother replied by a letter of ominous brevity: "Your

previous disorderly life, the exclusive power which you arrogated to yourself in the kingdom, your total neglect in avenging yourself upon your husband's murderers, the other husband whom you have married, and your excuse itself, are sufficient proofs of your having been an accomplice in your husband's murder."

Catherine did not suffer herself to be discouraged by Louis of Hungary's threats, and viewing her son's position with that clearness of observation which never failed her, she saw that their only means of safety was to effect their reconciliation with their mortal enemy Charles, by granting him all that he demanded. She calculated upon two things, that he would assist them in repulsing the King of Hungary, and afterward when the most pressing danger had been overcome; and if they failed, they would at least have the satisfaction of dragging him with them in their fall. The agreement was concluded in the gardens of the Castel-Nuovo, whither Charles repaired upon the invitation of the queen and his aunt. Joan granted to her cousin the long-wished-for title of Duke of Calabria. Charles, declared by this act heir to the kingdom, instantly marched upon Aquila, which had already raised the Hungarian standard. He was not aware that he was rushing upon his ruin.

When the Empress of Constantinople saw this man, whom of all others she most detested, gaily setting off upon this expedition, she looked after him with a gloomy air; guessing, by female instinct, that his destruction was approaching. Having now no more treason to perpetrate, or revenge to consummate upon the earth, she was attacked by some unknown malady, and suddenly expired without uttering one complaint, or exciting one regret.

CHAPTER III.

The King of Hungary having passed through Italy, entered the kingdom at the head of a formidable army. He received on his journey marks of interest and sympathy; the State of Verona, to prove the sincerity of their wishes for the success of his enterprise, had given him the assistance of three hundred horsemen.

The news of the arrival of the Hungarians threw the Neapolitan court into an indescribable state of alarm. It had been hoped that the king's march would have been stopped by the Pope's legate, who was at Foligno, to prohibit him, in the name of the holy father, and under pain of excommunication, from passing without the consent of the Holy See; but Louis of Hungary replied to Clement's legate that when he was master of Naples he would consider himself as the feudatory of the Church, but that until then he would answer for his actions to God and his conscience.

Thus the avenging army had fallen like a thunderbolt into the heart of the kingdom before any serious measures had been taken to oppose them. The queen, after assembling all the nobles who remained faithful to her cause, made them swear fidelity and homage to Louis of Tarento, whom she presented to them as her husband; and parting in tears from her faithful subjects, she secretly embarked in the middle of the night in a Provençal galley, for Marseilles. Louis of Tarento, following the dictates of his daring and chivalrous dis-

position, sallied out of Naples, at the head of three thousand horsemen and a considerable number of foot-soldiers, and encamped upon the banks of the Volturno to contest the passage with the hostile army; but the King of Hungary had foreseen this plan, and while his adversary was awaiting him at Capua, he arrived at Benevento, and on the same day he received the Neapolitan ambassadors, who, after congratulating him upon his entry, presented him with the keys of the city, and swore obedience to him as the lawful successor of Charles of Anjou.

The news of the surrender of Naples was soon spread through the queen's camp, and all the princes of the blood and the leaders of the army abandoned Louis of Tarento, and took refuge in the capital: Louis, accompanied by his ordinary councillor, Nicolas Acciajuoli, returned to Naples the same evening. All hope was now hourly disappearing: his brothers and cousins implored him instantly to fly, to avert the vengeance of the king from falling upon the whole town; unfortunately, however, there was no ship in the port in a fit state to set sail. The terror of the princes had now reached its height; but Louis, confiding in his usual good fortune, accompanied by the brave Acciajuoli, threw himself into an open boat, and commanding four sailors to row with all their strength, in a few minutes he had disappeared, leaving his family in great consternation, until intelligence was brought them that he had gained Pisa, and had gone to rejoin the queen in Provence.

Charles of Duras and Robert of Tarento, the eldest members of the two royal branches, upon being hastily consulted, decided upon softening the rage of the Hungarian monarch by the most complete submission; and,

leaving their youngest brothers at Naples, they hastily set out for Aversa, where the king had established himself.

Louis received them with marks of friendship, and inquired of them, with interest, why their brothers had not accompanied them; to which the princes replied that their brothers remained at Naples to prepare a reception worthy of his Majesty. Louis thanked them for their kind intentions; but at the same time begged them to invite the young princes to approach him, averring that his entry into Naples would be infinitely more agreeable to him if surrounded by all his family, and that he longed ardently to embrace his young cousins.

Charles and Robert, conforming to the king's wishes, immediately sent to summon their brothers to Aversa; but Louis of Duras, the eldest of the children, entreated the rest with many tears not to obey this command, and sent back a message that a violent headache prevented him from leaving Naples. So childish an excuse could not fail to irritate Charles, and upon the same day, a formal order, which admitted no delay, obliged the unfortunate children to appear before the monarch. Louis of Hungary embraced them, one after the other, with cordiality, put several questions to them in an affectionate manner, kept them to sup with him, and did not dismiss them until late in the night.

Immediately after the Duke of Duras had retired to his apartment, Lello de l'Aquila and the Count of Fondi glided mysteriously to his bedside, and, after assuring themselves that no one was within hearing, warned him that the king, at a council held that morning, had decided upon his death, and at the same time to deprive his cousins of liberty. Charles listened until they had finished with an incredulous air, and, suspecting some

treason, answered coldly that he had too much confidence in his cousin's good faith to listen for a moment to so gross a calumny. Lello insisted upon his veracity, and implored the duke, in the name of those who were most dear to him, to listen to their advice; but the duke, growing impatient, commanded them sternly to leave the room.

The next day was marked by the same kind reception from the king, the same caresses to the children, and the same invitation to supper. The banquet was magnificent, the hall blazed with light, golden vases were spread upon the table, beautiful flowers scattered their perfume, the rarest wines were served in abundance. The conversation was animated, and joy sparkled on every countenance.

Charles of Duras supped with the king at a separate table, surrounded by his brothers. By degrees his look became fixed and his brow thoughtful. He remembered that in that same hall Andrea had supped on the evening of his murder, and that of all those who had contributed to his death, some had expired in torments, others were still languishing in prison; the queen was exiled and a fugitive, compelled to implore the compassion of strangers; of all the actors in the murder he alone was free. This thought struck him with sudden terror. He applauded himself, however, for the profound tact with which he had conducted his infernal plot; and throwing off his gloomy air, he smiled with an expression of secret pride. He little knew that at that moment God's justice was hanging over his head. Lello de l'Aquila, who was waiting at table, coming close to his ear, whispered gloomily, "Monsignor, why will you not believe me? Fly; there is yet time."

Charles, enraged at this man's obstinacy, threatened

that if he added another word, he would repeat what he had said to the king.

"I have done my duty," murmured Lello, bowing his head; "God must dispose of you as he wills."

As he spoke these words, the king rose, and as the duke approached him to take leave, suddenly changing the expression of his face, he cried in a terrible voice: —

"Traitor! you are at last in my hands! You shall die as you have deserved! But before you are given over to the executioner, confess with your own lips the treasons which you have practised against our royal Majesty, although there is no want of evidence to condemn you to a punishment proportionate to your crimes. Therefore, Duke of Duras, tell me at once, did you not by your infamous manœuvres, by the assistance of your uncle, the Cardinal of Perigord, prevent my brother's coronation, by which means, being deprived of all royal authority, he was brought to his miserable end? Oh! do not endeavour to deny it. Here is the letter, sealed with your own seal; you wrote it in secret, but it accuses you in public. Did you not, after having drawn us hither to avenge our brother's death, — a death of which you were the instigator, — suddenly return to the queen's party, and marching against our city of Aquila, had you not the audacity to raise an army against our faithful subjects? You hoped, traitor, to use us as a footstool, by which you might ascend to the throne, after ridding yourself of all your rivals. You were but waiting our departure, to murder the lieutenant whom we should have left in our place, and then to seize upon the kingdom. But in this your foresight has failed you. There is yet another crime, which surpasses all the rest, — the crime of high treason, and which I will

punish without mercy. You carried off the wife whom Robert by his will, of which you were cognisant, had destined for ourself. Answer, wretch, what excuse have you for the abduction of the Princess Maria?"

Rage had so completely changed Louis's voice that these last words resembled more the howling of a wild beast than any human sounds: his eyes flashed with fearful light, his lips were pale and trembling. Charles and his brothers fell upon their knees, struck with mortal terror, and the unfortunate duke twice endeavoured to speak; but his teeth chattered, and he could not articulate a sound. Looking round him, and seeing his poor innocent brothers on the eve of ruin through his fault, he summoned a little courage, and, addressing the king, —

"Sire," said he, "the terrible look you bend upon me makes me tremble, as you see. But I implore you for pity upon my knees: for God is my witness that I did not summon you into the kingdom with any culpable intention; but my constant and sincere desire has been to place it under your dominion. I am certain that some perfidious counsellors have drawn upon me your hatred. If it is true that I appeared armed at Aquila, as you accuse me of having done, it was because I was compelled to do so by Queen Joan; but as soon as I learnt of your arrival at Fermo, I retired with my troops. I trust, then, in the name of Jesus Christ, that you will pardon and have mercy upon me, for the sake of my old services and my tried fidelity. But I will be silent, as I see you are irritated, and wait until your anger has passed. Once again, my liege, have compassion upon us, as we are in your Majesty's hands."

The king coldly averted his head, and delivered the prisoners to the custody of Stephen Vayvoda and the

Count of Zomic, who guarded them during the night in a room adjoining the king's apartment. Upon the following day, Louis, after another council had been held, commanded that Charles of Duras should be strangled at the same place where poor Andrea's death had been effected; and sent the other princes of the blood in chains to Hungary, where they were long detained prisoners.

Charles, stunned by so unexpected a misfortune, borne down by the memory of his crimes, basely trembling at the prospect of death, remained in a state of stupefaction. Upon his knees, with his face hidden in his hands, and uttering convulsive groans, he endeavoured to collect his thoughts, which seemed like the wanderings of some hideous dream. The darkness of night was upon his soul, and from his deep despair there arose bright figures, who railed at him as they flew away. Voices from the other world rang in his ears; and a long procession of phantoms glided before his eyes, as upon that day when Nicolas de Melazzo pointed out to him the conspirators in the vaults of the Castel-Nuovo; but now the spectres held their bleeding heads in their hands, and, waving them about by the hair, spirted drops of blood upon him. Others brandished razors, and all appeared threatening to smite him with the instruments of their own punishment. Pursued by this infernal crew, the wretched man opened his mouth to give a cry of agony, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and no sound escaped his lips. Now he beheld his mother, holding out her arms to him from afar; and it seemed to him, in his misery, that if he could but attain to where she was he would be saved. But at each step the sides of the road grew nearer and nearer to each other; in his frantic efforts to force his

way he left his flesh hanging upon the walls; and when, panting, naked, and bloody, he was almost at the wished-for place, his mother was again as far off as before, and all his efforts were to be renewed. The phantoms continually pursued him, and shouted in his ear, —

"Woe to the wretch who murdered his mother!"

Charles was roused at this frightful crisis by the tears of his brothers, who had come to embrace him for the last time previous to going on board the vessel which was to carry them to their destination. The duke asked their pardon in a humble voice, and relapsed into despair. The children threw themselves on the ground, requesting with loud cries to partake their brother's fate, and imploring death as a relief from their agony. They were at length separated, but the sound of their lamentations continued to ring in the ears of the condemned. After some minutes of silence, two soldiers and two Hungarian officers entered the room, to announce to the Duke of Duras that his hour was come.

Charles followed them without offering the slightest resistance, until they reached the fatal balcony where Andrea had been strangled. He was here asked if he wished to see a confessor. Upon his answering in the affirmative he was attended by a monk of the same convent in which the terrible scene had taken place, who listened to the confession of his sins, and granted him absolution. The duke then rose and walked to the place where Andrea had been thrown upon the ground, in order to pass the rope round his neck; and here, again kneeling down, he asked his executioners, —

"My friends, tell me, I pray you, are there no remaining hopes for my life?"

They replied in the negative, and Charles exclaimed, —

"Do, then, as you have been commanded."

At these words, one of the officers plunged his sword into his breast, the other cut off his head with a knife, and his corpse was thrown over the balcony into the garden, — the same garden in which Andrea's body had remained three days unburied.

The King of Hungary then began his march for Naples, still preceded by his death-banner, refusing all the honours which were offered to him, sending back the canopy under which he was to have entered, without pausing to give audience to the heads of the city, and without replying to the acclamations of the crowd. Armed at all points, he proceeded direct to the Castel-Nuovo, leaving behind him desolation and terror. His first act, upon his entry to the capital, was to order Donna Cancia to be immediately burnt alive. She was dragged, like the others, in a cart to the Piazza di San Eligio, and there thrown into the flames. The young lady, whose beauty had not faded under her sufferings, was dressed as upon a festival; gay and smiling until the last moment, she laughed at the executioners, and blew kisses to the crowd.

A few days afterward the king arrested Godfrey de Marsan, Count of Squillace and high admiral of the kingdom, but promised him his life on condition that he should deliver to him his relative Conrad of Catanzaro, also accused of being a party to the conspiracy against Andrea. The high admiral, purchasing his pardon by infamous treachery, had no hesitation in sending his own son to entrap Conrad into the town. The wretched man was soon in the king's power, who caused him to be broken alive upon a wheel, covered with razors.

The sight of these cruelties, instead of calming the

king's rage, appeared to increase it. Every day new denunciations were followed by new punishments. The prisons were overflowing; and it seemed as though he was about to use the town and kingdom as if the whole nation had assisted in Andrea's death. Murmurs began to be raised against this barbarous government, and every one's wishes were again turned toward the fugitive queen. The Neapolitan nobles had unwillingly taken the oath of fidelity; and when the turn of the counts of San Severino had come, fearing some snare, they refused to appear in the presence of the Hungarians; and fortifying themselves in Salerno, they despatched the Archbishop Roger, their brother, to learn the king's intentions toward them. Louis received him with great magnificence, and appointed him his privy counsellor and grand prothonotary of the kingdom. Upon this, Robert de San Severino, and Roger, Count of Clairmont, ventured alone to come before the king; and, after having paid homage to him, they retired to their estates. The other nobles imitated their example; and, concealing their discontent under apparent respect, awaited a favourable moment to throw off the foreign yoke.

In the mean time the queen had arrived at Nice, after a voyage of five days, without meeting with any obstruction in her flight. Her journey from thence to Provence was a kind of triumph. Her beauty, her youth, her misfortunes, — all, even to the mysterious rumours which were circulated respecting her adventures, conspired to awaken a universal interest in the country people. Games and fêtes were got up to soften the bitterness of her exile; but in the midst of the joy with which she was received, in the villages, castles, and towns, Joan remained overcome with continual sadness, and brooded upon her misfortunes in mute misery.

At the gates of Aix she found the clergy, the nobility, and the chief magistrates, who received her respectfully, but without any marks of enthusiasm. In proportion as the queen advanced, her astonishment was redoubled as she remarked the coldness of the people, and the gloomy and constrained manner of the nobles who were escorting her. A thousand causes for alarm presented themselves to her agitated mind, and she could not help fearing some stratagem of the King of Hungary.

Hardly had the party arrived at the Château-Arnaud, when the nobles, drawing up in two lines, allowed the queen, her councillor Spinelli, and two women to pass; then they closed their ranks, and Joan found herself separated from the rest of her suite. A guard was then set upon the gates of the fortress.

There could be no further doubt that the queen was a prisoner; but she could form no conjecture of the reason for this strange proceeding. She interrogated the high dignitaries, who, while protesting their devotion and respect, refused to explain the grounds upon which they acted, until they should have received intelligence from Avignon. At the same time they did not fail to pay Joan all the honours due to a queen, though she was kept in privacy, and refused permission to go out. This new anxiety augmented her grief; she knew not what had become of Louis of Tarento, and her imagination, always prone to invent misfortunes, repeated to her unceasingly that she would soon have to lament his loss.

Louis of Tarento, still accompanied by his faithful Acciajuoli, after enduring many fatigues, had been driven by the waves into the port of Pisa, and from there had taken the road to Florence, to request assistance in men and money. But the Florentines had

resolved to maintain a strict neutrality; and they consequently refused to receive him into their town. The prince, having lost this hope, was revolving gloomy projects in his mind, when Nicolas Acciajuoli interrupted him in a resolute tone: —

"Monsignor, men are not born to the continual enjoyment of a prosperous fate; misfortunes will occur in spite of the greatest human foresight. You were rich and powerful; you are now a fugitive, and seeking assistance from others; you must, then, reserve yourself for better days. I have still a considerable fortune, as well as relatives and friends whose wealth is at my entire disposal. Let us endeavour to rejoin the queen, and immediately determine upon what is to be done; as for me, I shall ever defend and obey you, as my master and my prince."

The prince accepted these generous offers with lively gratitude, and replied that he would trust his person and his fortune in the hands of his councillor. Acciajuoli, not content with his personal devotion to his master, induced his brother Angelo, Archbishop of Florence, who enjoyed great favour at the court of Avignon, to join with them in interesting the Pope in Louis of Tarento's cause. Accordingly, without delay, the prince, his councillor, and the good prelate, set sail for the port of Marseilles; but, learning that the queen was detained a prisoner at Aix, they disembarked at Aigues-Mortes, and proceeded promptly to Avignon.

The effects of the affection and esteem which the Pope entertained for the person and character of the Archbishop of Florence were soon manifested by the unexpected and almost paternal kindness with which Louis was received at the court of Avignon. When he bent his knee before the sovereign pontiff, his Holiness drew

him affectionately toward him, assisted him to rise, and saluted him by the title of king.

Two days after this, another prelate, the Archbishop of Aix, presented himself before the queen, and, bowing solemnly, addressed her in the following words: —

"Very gracious and well-beloved sovereign, allow the humblest and most devoted of your servants to ask mercy and pardon, in the name of your subjects, for the painful but necessary measure which we believed ourselves compelled to take with respect to your Majesty. At the time of your arrival amongst us, the council of your faithful city of Aix had learnt from a good source that the King of France had formed the scheme of giving our country to one of his sons, recompensing you for this loss by the cession of another domain, and that the Duc de Normandie was upon his way to Avignon, to solicit personally this exchange. We were resolved, madame, and had sworn before God, rather to perish to a man than submit to the execrable tyranny of the French. But before proceeding to bloodshed, we wished to retain your august person as a sacred hostage, to avert from our walls the miseries of war; but now we have intelligence that this odious pretension has been abandoned, in a letter which we have received from the sovereign pontiff. We restore you, therefore, your entire liberty, together with our wishes and prayers that you may remain amongst us. Depart then, madame, if such is your pleasure; but previously to quitting this country, which your departure will plunge into grief, leave us at least the hope that you have pardoned us the apparent violence with which we have acted toward you in the dread of losing you, and remember that on the day on which you cease to be our queen you will sign the death-warrant of your subjects."

Joan reassured the archbishop and the deputation of her good town of Aix by a melancholy smile, and promised them she would ever remember their love and attachment. For, this time, she could not be deceived in the true sentiments of the nobility and of the people; and fidelity so uncommon, which showed itself in sincere tears, touched her to the bottom of her heart, and made her bitterly recall the past. A splendid reception awaited her at Avignon. Louis of Tarento, and all the cardinals then at the court, had come out to meet her. Pages, clothed in the richest dresses, held a velvet canopy, emblazoned with golden *fleurs-de-lis*, over Joan's head. Handsome young men and beautiful maidens, with their heads crowned with flowers, preceded her with songs of praise. The streets through which they passed were thronged with spectators; the bells were ringing, as upon great festivals of the Church. Clement VI. received the queen at the palace with all the magnificence which attended solemn occasions.

No description can give an idea of the strange and bustling appearance of the city of Avignon at this time. Since Clement V. had transferred the pontifical see to Provence, Avignon, the rival of Rome, had become a town of palaces, in which the cardinals resided in unheard-of luxury. All the affairs of the people and of the king were conducted at the palace of Avignon. Ambassadors from every court, merchants from all nations, adventurers from all countries, Italians, Spaniards, Hungarians, Arabians, Jews, soldiers, gypsies, buffoons, poets, monks, and courtesans swarmed and jostled against each other in the streets. It was a confusion of tongues, of customs, and of dress, — an inextricable jumble of pomp and poverty, luxury and misery, prostitution and gran-

deur. Hence the austere poets of the middle age have termed this town "the modern Babylon."

There exists a curious memento of Joan's stay at Avignon, and of the exercise of her sovereign authority. Enraged at the impudence of the courtesans, who elbowed with effrontery all respectable persons in the town, the Queen of Naples published a celebrated proclamation, the first of the kind, and which has served for a model in other matters of the same sort, obliging these unfortunate women to live shut up in one asylum, which should be open all the year, with the exception of the last three days of the holy week, and the entrance to which should be prohibited to the Jews at all times. An abbess, elected every year, presided over this singular convent; rules were established for the maintenance of order, and severe penalties enacted against any breach of discipline. The lawyers of the day made a great clamour against this salutary institution; the ladies of Avignon defended the queen loudly against the calumnious reports tending to stain her character; and there was but one unanimous voice extolling the wisdom of Andrea's widow: only, this concert of praises was broken by the murmurs of the recluses themselves, who, in their coarse language, accused Joan of Naples of restricting their trade in order to reserve its monopoly for herself.

In the mean time Maria had rejoined her sister. She had taken refuge, accompanied by her two little daughters, after her husband's death, in the convent of Santa Croce; and while Louis of Hungary was employed in destroying his victims, she, exchanging her dress for the frock of an old monk, had escaped by a miracle, and succeeded in getting on board a ship bound for Provence. Maria gave her sister frightful accounts of the cruelties practised by Louis of Hungary. In a short time a new

proof of his implacable hatred confirmed the story of the poor princess: this was the arrival of his ambassadors at the court of Avignon, to petition formally for the queen's condemnation.

It was a memorable day upon which Joan of Naples pleaded her own cause before the Pope, and in the presence of all the cardinals then at Avignon, of all the ambassadors of foreign powers, of eminent persons come from all parts of Europe, to be the witnesses of a trial unparalleled in history. Imagine an immense enclosure, in the centre of which, upon an elevated throne, as president of the august consistory, sat the vicar of God, the absolute and supreme judge, invested with temporal and spiritual power, with human and divine authority. At the right and left of the sovereign pontiff were seated the cardinals in their purple robes, and behind these kings of the Sacred College were arranged, majestically extending to the bottom of the hall, their court of bishops, vicars, canons, deacons, archdeacons, and all the immense papal hierarchy. In front of the pontifical throne were the seats reserved for the Queen of Naples and her suite. At the feet of the Pope were placed the ambassadors of the King of Hungary, who were to perform the part of silent accusers, - - the circumstances of the crime, and the proofs of the queen's culpability, having been previously debated by a commission appointed for that purpose. The remaining part of the hall was filled by a brilliant crowd of high dignitaries, illustrious captains, and noble ambassadors, each rivalling the others in luxury and pride. Every breath was suspended, and every eye was fixed upon the place from which Joan was to defend herself; and a movement of intense curiosity was visible through the compact mass, when the queen took the place reserved for her use.

The queen appeared, led by her uncle, the old Cardinal of Perigord, and her aunt, the Countess Agnes. Her demeanor was at once so modest and so lofty, her brow so sad and so pure, her look so fearless and so full of confidence, that before she uttered a sound the hearts of the whole assembly were with her. Joan was now twenty years old, and in the full bloom of her beauty; but the deadly paleness of her soft and transparent skin, as well as her emaciated cheeks, showed the sufferings of her mind. Among the spectators was a young man, with brown hair, a bright eye, and strongly marked features, of whom our readers will hear more in the sequel; but, not to distract their attention, we will merely say that this young man was named Jayme d'Aragon, Prince of Majorca, and that he would have spilt every drop of his blood to have wiped away one of the tears which were trembling upon the queen's eyelashes.

Joan spoke in a broken and tremulous voice, and was obliged to pause from time to time, to dry the tears which interrupted her speech. She related with so much grief the story of her husband's death, painted with such graphic truth the confusion and terror with which she had been seized at that frightful event, and covered her brow with her hands with such frantic despair, that a shudder of pity and horror ran through the assembly. And certainly, if at this moment her story was false, yet her anguish was true and terrible. An angel fallen through crime, she lied like Satan; but, like Satan, she was torn by the undying tortures of remorse. When at the close of her justification, melting into tears, she implored assistance and protection against the usurper of her kingdom, a universal cry of assent drowned her concluding words. Many laid their hands on their swords; and the Hungarian ambassadors hastily with-

drew from the assembly, covered with confusion and dismay.

On the same evening, to the great satisfaction of the whole people, a decree was issued declaring Joan of Naples innocent of her husband's murder. Only, as no possible excuse could be offered for her conduct after the event, and her neglect in prosecuting the authors of the crime, the Pope recognised a proof of magical intervention in the whole affair, and concluded that the fault attributed to Joan was the necessary consequence of some malignant fate, from which it was impossible to defend herself.[1] At the same time his Holiness confirmed the queen's marriage with Louis of Tarento, and granted to him the order of the golden rose, and the title of King of Sicily and Jerusalem. Perhaps there was some connexion between this decision and the fact that Joan, upon the eve of her acquittal, had sold the town of Avignon to the Pope, for the sum of forty thousand florins.

Whilst the queen was pleading her cause at the court of Clement VI., a horrible epidemic, described by the name of the *black plague*, the same as that of which Boccaccio has left us so admirable a description, was ravaging the kingdom of Naples and the other parts of Italy. According to Matteo Villani's calculations, Florence lost, by this terrible scourge, three-fifths of her population, Bologna two-thirds, and nearly the whole

[1] E pero che per assoluta verità del fatto non poteano scusare la regina e levare il volgo della dubbiosa fama, proposero che se alcuno sospetto di non perfetto amore si potesse proporre o provare che ciò non era venuto per corrotta volontà della regina, ma per forza di *malie* ovvero *fatture* che gli erano state fatte, alle quali la sua natura fragile, femminile non avea saputo nè potuto riparare. — MATTEO VILLANI, book ii., chap. 24.

of Europe was depopulated in this frightful proportion. The Neapolitans were, by this time, thoroughly disgusted with the barbarity and rapacity of the Hungarians, and only waiting a favourable opportunity to rise against the foreign oppressor, and to recall their legitimate sovereign, whom, with all her faults, such was the influence of youth and beauty upon this sensual people, they had never ceased to love.

Scarcely had this contagion begun to scatter disorder amongst the army and confusion in the city, when imprecations burst from all parts against the tyrant and his butchers. Louis, threatened at once by the wrath of Heaven and the vengeance of men, equally in dread of disease and revolt, disappeared in the middle of the night, and, leaving the government of Naples to Conrado Lupo, one of his officers, he hastened to embark at Barletta, and in his turn quitted the kingdom, as he had, a few months before, compelled Louis of Tarento to leave it.

This intelligence arrived at Avignon at the precise time when the Pope was about to grant his bull of absolution to the queen. It was immediately decided to retake the kingdom from the possession of Louis of Hungary's commissioner. Nicolas Acciajuoli set out for Naples, armed with the bull which was to prove the entire innocence of the queen, to dissipate all scruples, and awaken the people's enthusiasm. The councillor took his way first to the castle of Melzi, commanded by his son Lorenzo, and the only fortress which had held out against the Hungarians.

The father and son embraced with the feeling of well-grounded pride which each felt at the consciousness that two men of the same family had heroically done their duty. The governor of Melzi informed his father that

the arrogance and tyranny of the queen's enemies had disgusted every one; that a conspiracy in Joan's favour, organised in the university of Naples, had vast ramifications in every part of the kingdom, and that discord reigned in the foreigner's camp. The indefatigable councillor then proceeded to Naples, proclaiming everywhere the queen's acquittal, her marriage with Louis of Tarento, and the indulgences which the Pope promised to those who would receive their lawful sovereigns like loyal subjects.

Joan borrowed money wherever she could, armed galleys, and set off for Marseilles with her husband, her sister, and her two faithful councillors, Acciajuoli and Spinelli, upon the 10th of September, 1348. The king and queen, not being able to effect an entrance at that port, which was in the possession of the enemy, disembarked at Santa-Maria-del-Carmine, near the river Sebeto, and proceeded to a palace near Porta Capuana, in the midst of the most frantic applause from an immense crowd, and accompanied by all the Neapolitan nobility. The Hungarians fortified themselves in the city; but Nicolas Acciajuoli, at the head of the queen's partisans, commenced such a rigid blockade that one-half of her enemies were compelled to surrender, and the rest, betaking themselves to flight, scattered themselves in the interior of the kingdom.

We shall not follow Louis of Tarento in his perilous career through Apulia, Calabria, and the Abruzzi, where he, one by one, recovered the fortresses occupied by the Hungarians. By unparalleled efforts of valour and patience, he had mastered almost all the considerable places, when the aspect of affairs changed, and the fortune of war, for a second time, turned against him. A German captain, named Warner, who had deserted from

the Hungarian army, to sell himself to the queen, having resold himself by new treachery, allowed himself to be surprised at Corneto by Conrado Lupo, the King of Hungary's chief lieutenant, and openly joined him, with a large body of adventurers who fought under his command. This unforeseen defection compelled Louis of Tarento to make his way to Naples; and in a short time the King of Hungary, informed that his troops were rallying around his standard, and that they only waited his return to march upon the capital, disembarked at the port of Manfredoni, with a large reinforcement of horse and foot soldiers, and, seizing upon Trani, Canosi, and Salerno, he laid siege to Aversa.

This intelligence was like a thunderbolt to Joan and her husband. The Hungarian army, composed of ten thousand cavalry and seven thousand infantry, was opposed by only five hundred soldiers, commanded by Giacomo Pignatelli. But in spite of this tremendous disproportion of numbers, the Neapolitan general repulsed the attack with great vigour; and the King of Hungary, who was fighting in the front, was wounded in the foot by an arrow. Louis, seeing that it would be difficult to carry the place by storm, resolved to force it by famine. The besieged for three months performed prodigies of valour; but resistance was impossible, and each day the Hungarians expected them to capitulate. Renaud des Baux, who ought to have arrived at Marseilles with a squadron of galleys, to defend the ports of the capital, and protect the queen's flight in the event of the Hungarian army invading Naples, delayed by contrary winds, was compelled to cast anchor upon the way. Everything seemed to conspire in favour of the enemy, and Louis of Tarento, whose generous soul was repugnant to shedding the blood of his valiant adherents in a desperate and unequal strug-

gle, behaved nobly, offering the King of Hungary to decide their quarrel by single combat. The following is the authentic letter of Joan's husband: —

"Illustrious King of Hungary, who are come to invade our kingdom, we, by the grace of God, King of Jerusalem and Sicily, challenge you to single combat. We know well that you trouble yourself no more about the death of your soldiers than if they were but dogs; but we, who fear the misfortunes which may happen to our soldiers and adherents, wish a personal combat with you to terminate this war, and to restore peace to our country. He of us two, therefore, who shall survive the other, shall be king. And that the duel may take place without obstacle, we propose that it shall be fought, either at Paris, in presence of the French king, in the town of Perugia, at Avignon, or at Naples. Choose one of these four places, and answer our proposal."

The King of Hungary, after taking the advice of his councillors, replied as follows: —

"Great King, we have read and considered your letter, and your challenge to single combat has pleased us extremely, but we do not approve of any of the four places which you have named, for several reasons. The King of France is your maternal grandfather, and although we are also related to him, he is not so nearly related to us as to you. Avignon, although belonging to the sovereign pontiff, is the capital of Provence, and has always been under your government. We have not much more confidence in the town of Perugia, which is devoted to your cause. As to the city of Naples, it is not even necessary to write the reason why we reject it; you know well it is in revolt against us, and that you reign there. But if you desire to combat with us, it must be in the presence of the Emperor of Germany, who is the supreme master; or the King of England, who is our common ally, or the Patriarch of Aquileia, who is a good Catholic. But if you, in your turn, reject the places we propose, in order to remove all diffi-

culty, and abridge all delay, we shall soon be near you with our army, and can then decide our quarrel, in the presence of the two camps."

Notwithstanding the exchange of these letters, Louis of Tarento's proposed duel did not take place. The garrison of Aversa had capitulated after an heroic resistance; and it was well known that if the King of Hungary could arrive under the walls of Naples, he would not need to risk his life to take possession of the city. Fortunately, the Provençal galleys at length arrived in the harbour. The queen and her husband had scarcely time to embark, and take refuge in Gaeta, before the Hungarian army had arrived before Naples. The city was about to surrender, and had sent messengers to the king, humbly to implore for peace; but such was the insolence of the Hungarian that the people, enraged, took up arms, and prepared to defend their hearths with all the fury of despair.

While the Neapolitans were opposing the enemy at the Porta Capuana, a strange circumstance was occurring at the other extremity of the town, which gives a complete picture of those times of barbarous violence and infamous treachery. The widow of Charles of Duras, shut up in the Castello del Ovo, was waiting in intense anxiety the galley in which she was to rejoin her sister. Poor Maria, pale and trembling, with her little daughters strained to her breast, listened eagerly to every sound, with a mixture of terror and hope. Suddenly steps were heard in the passage, and a friendly voice sounded in her ears. Maria fell upon her knees, and uttered a cry of joy; it was her deliverer.

Renaud des Baux, admiral of the Provençal squadron, entered respectfully, followed by his eldest son and his chaplain.

"Thanks, signor!" cried Maria, rising; "we are saved!"

"One moment, madame," replied Renaud, motioning her to stop; "you shall be saved, but upon one condition."

"Upon one condition?" murmured the astonished princess.

"Listen, madame: the King of Hungary, the avenger of the assassins of Andrea, and the murderer of your husband, is at the gates of Naples; the Neapolitan people and soldiers, after a last effort of courage, have yielded: and, in a short time, the fire and sword of the victorious army will scatter desolation and death on all sides. And this time the Hungarian executioner will spare no victims; he will slay mothers before the eyes of their children, — children in their mothers' arms. The drawbridge of this castle is raised, and every man capable of holding a sword is at the other end of the town. Woe unto you then, Maria of Duras, if the King of Hungary remembers that you preferred his rival to him!"

"But are you not here to save me?" cried Maria, in a voice of anguish. "Did not Joan, my sister, order you to conduct me to her?"

"Your sister is in no condition to give orders," replied Renaud, with a contemptuous smile. "She could only give me thanks for saving her life and that of her husband, who basely took to flight at the approach of the man whom he had dared to challenge to single combat."

Maria gazed fixedly at the admiral, to be certain that it was indeed he, who spoke of his sovereigns with such insolence; but, terrified by the immovable expression of his countenance, she continued in a gentle voice: —

"Since it is to your generosity alone that I shall owe

my life, and the lives of my children, I shall be eternally grateful. But hasten, signor; for every moment I expect to hear the cry of vengeance, and you will not leave me to be the prey of my cruel enemy?"

"God forbid, madame! I will save you at all risks; but, as I have already said, upon one condition."

"What is it?" inquired Maria, with forced resignation.

"It is that you immediately espouse my son, in the presence of our reverend chaplain."

"Audacious!" cried Maria, starting back, her face crimsoned with indignation and shame: "is it thus you dare address the sister of your lawful sovereign? Return thanks to God that I pardon this insult, considering that a sudden frenzy has disturbed your reason; and endeavour, by your future devotion, to induce me to forget your past conduct."

The count, without answering a word, made a sign to his son and the priest, and made a movement as if to leave the room. At that moment Maria rushed toward him, and, joining her hands, implored him, in God's name, not to abandon her. Renaud stopped.

"I might have revenged myself," said he, "for the affront which you have given me in refusing my son with so much haughtiness; but I leave that care to Louis of Hungary, who will acquit himself of it excellently."

"Mercy for my poor daughters!" repeated the princess; "mercy, at least for my children, if my tears cannot touch your heart."

"If you love your children," answered the admiral, knitting his brows, "you will know how to act."

"But I do not love your son," cried Maria, in a voice in which pride and terror were strangely mingled.

"Oh! my God, can any one thus outrage the feelings of a poor woman? But you, my father, — you, who are the minister of truth and justice, — make this man understand that God cannot be made the witness of an oath which will lead to madness — to despair!"

Turning to the admiral's son, she addressed him with sobs and tears: —

"You are young: you have loved, perhaps — or, at least, you will one day love. Oh! I appeal to your honour as a young man, to your courtesy as a knight, to join with me in endeavouring to dissuade your father from this fatal scheme. You have never before seen me, and you know not that I do not secretly love another man. Your pride ought to revolt at seeing a weak woman so maltreated, who, at your feet, implores mercy and protection. One word from you, Robert, and I will bless you to the last moment of my life. Your remembrance will be engraved on my soul as that of my guardian angel, and my children shall be taught to utter your name in their evening prayers to God. Oh, tell me, will you save me? Do so, and perhaps one day I shall learn to love you."

"I must obey my father," answered Robert, without once raising his eyes upon the fair suppliant.

The priest remained silent. Two minutes elapsed, during which these four persons, each absorbed by their reflections, remained as immovable as statues. In this terrible interval Maria was tempted to throw herself into the sea; but a confused and distant noise broke upon her ear, which gradually increasing, and the voices becoming more and more distinct, she heard the cries of women in distress proceeding from the street: —

"Fly! fly! fly! God has abandoned us! The Hungarians are in the town!"

The tears of Maria's children answered these cries, and little Margherita, holding out her arms to her mother, expressed her terror in her childish language. Renaud, without deigning to cast a look upon this touching scene, drew his son toward the door.

"Stay!" said the princess, holding out her hand with a solemn gesture; "since God will send no other succour for my children, it is his wish that the sacrifice be accomplished."

And, falling upon her knees before the priest, she bent her head like a victim who awaits the blow of the executioner's axe. Robert des Baux placed himself at her side, and the preacher pronounced the usual forms of the church, and consecrated this infamous marriage with a sacrilegious benediction.

"All is finished," murmured the widow of Duras, casting a tearful glance upon her two daughters.

"No, all is not yet finished," replied the admiral, sternly. "Before setting off the marriage must be consummated."

"Oh, justice of God!" cried the princess, in a stifled voice, and fell senseless on the floor.

Renaud des Baux steered his galleys for Marseilles, where he trusted to have his son crowned Count of Provence, in right of his strange marriage with Maria of Duras. But this base treachery was not to remain unpunished. The wind began to blow furiously, and drove them back toward Gaeta, where the queen and her husband had just arrived. Renaud ordered his sailors to keep out at sea, threatening to throw any one overboard who should dare to disobey his orders. The crew murmured; mutinous cries began to be heard on all sides; and the admiral, seeing that all would be lost, changed from threats to entreaties. But the princess, who had

recovered her senses at the first thunder-clap, rushed upon deck, and cried loudly for help.

"Help, Louis! help, my brave knights! death to the traitors who have basely outraged me!"

Louis of Tarento, followed by ten of his bravest knights, entered a large boat, and by vigorous exertions at the oars, they soon reached the galley. Maria briefly related the story of the treachery practised toward her, and turning to the admiral, with a withering look, she defied him to defend himself.

"Wretch!" cried the king, rushing upon the traitor, and running him through the body with his sword. Then, having caused his son and the unworthy priest, who had been the accomplices of his odious violence, to be loaded with chains, he returned to the port, accompanied by the princess and her daughters.

In the mean time the Hungarians, having entered one of the gates of Naples, triumphantly defiled toward the Castel-Nuovo; but while they were crossing the Piazza delle Corregie, the Neapolitans perceived that the enemy's men and horses were so exhausted by the long-continued fatigues of the siege from Aversa that a breath could have dispersed this army of phantoms. Then, changing from terror to audacity, they rushed upon the conquerors, and drove them back beyond the city walls. This sudden popular reaction subdued the King of Hungary's pride, and made him more docile to the counsels of Clement VI., who at length thought it right to interfere. A truce was in the first place concluded, to continue from the month of February, 1350, to the beginning of April, 1351; but on the following year, this temporary cessation of hostilities was changed into a definitive peace, in consideration of the sum of three hundred thousand florins, which Joan paid to the King of Hungary to defray the expenses of the war.

After the departure of the Hungarians, a legate was sent by the Pope to crown Joan and Louis of Tarento, and the day appointed for this solemnity was the 25th of May, the day of Pentecost. All the historians of that time speak enthusiastically of the magnificence of this festival, which has been immortalised by the pencil of Giotto, in the frescos of the church, which, upon this occasion, took the name of the *Incoronata*. A general amnesty was proclaimed for all those persons who had fought upon either side in the past wars; and the king and queen were received, upon their way to the ceremony, with shouts of gladness.

But the day's joy was disturbed by an accident, which appeared to that superstitious people to be a sinister omen. As Louis of Tarento, mounted upon a richly caparisoned horse, was passing the Porta Petruccia, some ladies, who were viewing the procession from their windows, threw so many flowers upon the king that the affrighted horse began to rear, and broke the bit of his bridle. Louis, finding himself unable to hold his steed, jumped lightly to the ground, but as he did so, the crown fell from his head, and broke into three pieces. Upon that same day expired the only daughter of Louis and Joan.

Nevertheless, the king, not wishing to cast a gloom upon this brilliant ceremony, for three days continued a course of tilts, tournaments, and festivities. But from this day, marked by a melancholy presage, his life was but a long succession of misfortunes. After carrying on wars in Sicily and Apulia, and quelling the rebellion of Louis of Duras, who ended his days in a dungeon, Louis of Tarento, exhausted by pleasure, undermined by a wasting disease, and overcome by domestic troubles, died of ague upon the 5th of June, 1362, at the age of forty-

two: and scarcely had his corpse been laid in the royal tomb at San Domenico, before several suitors were disputing for the queen's hand.

But it was the Prince of Majorca, the handsome young man whom we have already mentioned, who carried her off from all his rivals, among whom was the son of the King of France.

Jayme of Aragon had one of those calm and melancholy faces which a woman cannot resist. Great misfortunes, nobly endured, had cast a gloom upon his youth; he had passed thirteen years shut up in an iron cage, from which frightful prison he had escaped by means of a false key, and had afterward wandered from court to court to recover his estates, and, it is said, was reduced to such a state of poverty that he was compelled to beg his bread. The fine person of the young stranger and the story of his adventures struck both Joan and Maria at the court of Avignon. Maria, in particular, loved him with a passion much too violent to be concealed in her heart.

When Jayme of Aragon arrived in Naples, the unfortunate princess, who had been married with a dagger at her breast, regained her liberty by means of a crime. Followed by four armed men, she entered the prison where Robert des Baux continued to expiate a crime which had been much more his father's than his own. Maria stood before the prisoner with crossed arms, blanched cheeks, and trembling lips. The interview was terrible. It was now the turn of the princess to threaten; of the young man to beg for mercy. Maria remained deaf to his entreaties, and the unfortunate man's bleeding head rolled at her feet, while his body was thrown by the executioners into the sea. But God did not allow this murder to go unpunished. Jayme preferred the queen to her sister; and the widow of Duras gained by

the crime only the contempt of the man whom she loved, and the gnawing remorse which brought her to an early grave.

Joan was married successively to Jayme of Aragon, son of the King of Majorca, and to Otho of Brunswick, of the imperial family of Saxony. We shall pass rapidly over these years, to reach the close of this story of crimes and expiations. Jayme's existence, separated from his wife, continued to be one of storms and disasters. He struggled for a long time in Spain against Peter the Cruel, who had usurped his kingdom, and died in Navarre about the end of the year 1375. As to Otho, not being able to escape the divine vengeance which was hanging over the court of Naples, he courageously shared the queen's fortunes to the last. Not having any legitimate offspring, Joan adopted her nephew, Carlo del Pace, so called from the peace of Treviso. This young man was the son of Louis of Duras, who, after revolting against Louis of Tarento, had perished miserably in a prison. The child would have shared his father's fate had it not been for Joan's intercession. She afterward loaded him with benefits, and married him to Margherita, her sister Maria's daughter by her cousin Charles of Duras.

Grave dissensions arose about this time between the queen and one of her old subjects, Bartolommeo Prignani, who had become Pope under the name of Urban VI. Irritated by the queen's opposition, the Pope had one day said in a fit of rage that he should live to see her spinning in a cloister. Joan, to revenge herself for this insult, openly favoured the antipope, Clement VII., and offered him an asylum in her own château, when, pursued by the troops of Urban, he had taken refuge at Fondi. But the people rose against Clement, slew the Archbishop of Naples, who had assisted at his election,

broke the cross which was carried before the procession of the antipope, and left him barely time enough to get on board a galley, in which he set sail for Provence. Urban declared Joan deposed from her throne, absolved her subjects from their oaths of allegiance, and gave the crown of Sicily and Jerusalem to Carlo del Pace, who marched upon Naples at the head of eight thousand Hungarians. The queen, unable to believe in such base ingratitude, sent his wife Margherita, whom she could have kept as a hostage, and her two children, Ladislaus and Joan, afterward the second queen of that name, to meet her adopted son. But, in a short time, the victorious army arrived before Naples, and Carlo besieged the queen in her palace, ungratefully forgetting that that woman had saved his life, and loved him as a mother.

Joan endured, during this siege, what soldiers hardened to the fatigues of war could not have borne. She saw her faithful subjects perishing around her, destroyed by hunger or decimated by disease. After depriving them of provisions, the besiegers threw putrefying corpses into the fortress, to infect the air they breathed. Otho was detained with his troops at Aversa; Louis of Anjou, brother of the King of France, whom she had named as her successor after disinheriting her nephew, did not come to her aid, and the Provençal galleys which Clement VII. had promised to send her had not made their appearance in the harbour. Joan demanded a truce of fifty days, at the end of which time she engaged to surrender the fortress, if Otho did not come to her relief.

Upon the fiftieth day Otho's army entered by the side of Piedigrotta. The contest was furiously maintained upon both sides; and Joan, upon the top of a tower, followed with her eyes the cloud of dust which rose from her husband's horse through the thickest of the fight.

For a long time the victory remained uncertain; when at length the prince pushed bravely toward the royal standard, and, eager to engage his enemy hand to hand, rushed into the centre of the hostile army with so violent a shock that, attacked upon all sides, covered with blood and sweat, and with his sword broken in his hand, he was compelled to surrender. An hour afterward Carlo wrote to his uncle, the King of Hungary, that Joan was in his power, and that he waited his Majesty's commands respecting the fate of his prisoner.

It was upon a lovely May morning that the queen became a prisoner in the castle of Aversa. Otho had been released on condition that he should quit Naples; and Louis of Anjou, having at length raised an army of fifty thousand men, marched in all haste to reconquer the kingdom. Neither of these welcome changes in her situation had been communicated to Joan, who had for some days been living in complete solitude. Spring was displaying all its beauty upon these enchanting plains, which have well deserved the name of *campagna felice*. The orange-trees, scattering perfume from their blossoms, the cherry-trees, covered with their ruby-coloured fruit, the olives displaying their emerald leaves, the pomegranate with its crimson flowers, the wild mulberry, and the evergreen laurel, — all the vegetation which has not need of the hand of man flourished in that delicious spot, which Nature has laid out like a vast garden, intersected by little solitary paths, bordered by green hedges, and watered by subterranean springs. Joan leant upon her window, breathing the sweet perfumes of spring. A light breeze played upon her burning brow and cooled her fevered cheeks. Melodious and distant voices, the sounds of well-known lays, alone broke the silence of the little room in which the most agitated and brilliant ex-

istence of that bustling time was passing away in solitary tears and repentance.

The queen recalled in her mind the circumstances of her whole life, from the age of childhood, — fifty years of deceptions and sufferings. She remembered the happy days of her infancy, the affection of her grandfather, the pure delights of that period of innocence; her childish games with her little sister and her cousins. She remembered how she had trembled at the first thoughts of marriage, of constraint, lost liberty, and bitter regrets; she remembered with horror the deceitful words whispered in her ear, which had sown in her young heart the seeds of corruption and vice, and poisoned her whole after life. Then came the memory of her first love, of Robert of Cabane's perjury and desertion, and the moments of delirium which she had passed in the arms of Bertrand of Artois.

All the drama, with its tragic catastrophe, came back with vivid clearness to her melancholy reflections. And then cries of agony echoed in her soul, as upon that terrible and fatal night when the dying voice of Andrea implored mercy from his assassins. A deathlike silence succeeded this horrible agony, and the queen saw the vehicles passing before her eyes in which her accomplices had been tortured. All the rest was one continued dream of flight and exile, remorse of the soul, chastisement from Heaven and malediction from the earth. A frightful solitude surrounded the queen: husbands, lovers, relations, friends, all that she had loved or hated in the world, were dead; her joys, her griefs, her wishes, and her hopes had all disappeared for ever. The unhappy queen, unable to struggle against these images of desolation, tore herself from her terrible revery, and, kneeling down before a crucifix, wept bitterly and prayed with fervour.

She was still beautiful, notwithstanding the extreme paleness of her face. The noble contour of her features remained in all its purity; the glow of repentance animated her fine eyes with superhuman brightness, and the hopes of pardon raised a heavenly smile upon her lips.

Suddenly, the door of the room in which she was praying flew open; and two Hungarian barons, in complete armour, presented themselves before her, making a sign that she should follow them. She rose and obeyed in silence; but a dismal cry burst from her when she recognised the place where Andrea and Charles of Duras had each died a violent death. Recovering herself, however, she inquired in a calm voice why they had brought her to that place. One of the barons replied by showing her a rope of silk and gold.

"Let God's justice be accomplished!" cried Joan, falling upon her knees.

And in a few minutes she had ceased to suffer.

This was the third corpse which had been thrown over the balcony of Aversa.[1]

[1] This story, both in its substance and in its details, is recorded with the most scrupulous truth. We have consulted the different versions of Giannone, Summonte, Villani, Rainaldo, Palmieri, Collenuccio, Spondano, Gataro, and particularly the Latin chronicle of Domenico Gravina, the contemporary author.

NISIDA.

NISIDA.

1825.

If our readers, struck by the Italian proverb, wishing to see Naples before they die, should inquire of us which is the most favourable time to visit that city of enchantments, we should advise them to land at the Mole or the Mergellina upon a fine summer's day, at the hour when some solemn procession is leaving the cathedral.

At such a time, no pen can describe the profound and lively emotion of the people. The whole city appears as gay as a bride upon a marriage morning: the gloomy fronts of marble and granite disappear under silken hangings and garlands of flowers; the rich parade in their luxury; the poor clothe themselves proudly in their rags. All is light, harmony, and perfume, and you hear around you a noise like the buzzing of an immense hive, intermixed with cries of festivity. The church bells are all repeating their sonorous scales, the sound of military music is heard playing triumphal marches in the distance, and the venders of sherbet and pastry extol their different articles with lungs of iron. Groups are formed, accosting, questioning, and gesticulating; on all sides may be seen sparkling looks, eloquent pantomime, and picturesque attitudes; there reigns a general bustle, a bewitching charm, an indescribable intoxication of the spirits. The earth is very nearly akin to heaven, and it will be

easily understood that, if God would chase away death from this place of delights, the Neapolitans would desire no other paradise.

Our story commences with one of these magical scenes. It was the day of the Assumption, in the year 1825, four or five hours after sunrise; and the long street of Forcella, lighted up from one end to the other by its oblique rays, divided the city into two parts. The pavement, composed of lava, shone with all the brilliancy of mosaic, and the king's troops, adorned with waving plumes, lined the streets like a living wall. The balconies, casements, terraces, and wooden galleries, erected during the night, all thronged with spectators, had much the appearance of the boxes of a theatre. An immense crowd, clothed in the most lively colours, invaded the reserved space, and here and there broke through the military banks, like an overflowing torrent. These intrepid gazers, glued to their places, would have waited the half of their lives without exhibiting the slightest signs of impatience.

At last, toward noon, the report of a cannon was heard, and was followed by a cry of general satisfaction. This was the signal that the procession had set out from the cathedral. At the same moment a charge of cavalry swept back those persons who remained in the middle of the street, the regiments of the line opened their ranks to allow them to make their escape, and in a short time nothing remained upon the wide causeway but some startled dog, hooted by the people, hunted by the soldiers, and running here and there to escape from its unpleasant situation.

The cortège proceeded through the street of Vescovato; the van was composed of the different companies of merchants and artificers, hatters, weavers, bakers, butchers, cutlers, and goldsmiths. They were clothed in black

coats, short breeches, and shoes with silver buckles. As there was nothing in the appearance of these gentlemen to amuse the crowd, whispers began by degrees to be heard among the spectators; then the lightest spirits hazarded jests upon the fattest among the citizens; and at length the boldest lazzaroni crept between the soldiers' legs to pick up the wax which fell from their lighted tapers.

After the working classes came the religious orders, from the Dominicans to the Carthusians, from the Carmelites to the Capuchins. They advanced slowly, their eyes fixed upon the ground, with austere gait, and their hands upon their hearts. There were some among these faces, ruddy, beaming, and fat, with herculean heads, set upon necks like those of bulls; others with lean and sunken cheeks, hollowed by suffering and expiation, resembling phantoms rather than living men, — in one word, the bright and the dark side of monastic life.

At this moment Nunziata and Gelsomina, two charming girls, profiting by the gallantry of an old corporal, advanced their pretty heads to the front row. This was a flagrant interruption of the continuity, but the old veteran appeared inclined to slacken his discipline.

"Look! there is Father Bruno!" said Gelsomina, suddenly. "Good-day, Father Bruno!"

"Hush! cousin, do not speak to the procession."

"That would be a good jest! — Why, that is my confessor. Am I not to say good-day to my confessor?"

"Be silent, babbler!"

"Who said that?"

"Oh! my dear, it is Brother Cucuzza, the collector."

"Where? Where is he?

"There; see, he is laughing to himself."

While the two cousins were thus making their endless commentaries upon the Capuchins and their beards, the

capes of the canons, and the surplices of the seminarists, the *feroci* ran from the other side, to re-establish order with the butt-ends of their carbines.

"By the blood of my patron!" cried a stentorian voice, "if I get hold of you between finger and thumb, I will make you remember it for the rest of your life."

"What is the matter, Gennaro?"

"It is this cursed rascal, who for the last hour has been standing behind my back, as if he could see through it."

"It is scandalous!" retorted the person alluded to, in a doleful voice; "I have been here ever since yesterday evening; I slept in the open air to get a good place, and, after all, this abominable giant comes and plants himself before me like an obelisk."

The fellow lied like a Jew, but the crowd rose unanimously against the obelisk. He possessed an undoubted superiority over them, and the majority are always composed of pygmies.

"Come down there from your pedestal!"

"Get off your ladder!"

"Take your hat off!"

"Take your head off!"

"Sit down!"

"Lie down!"

This outbreak of curiosity, which evaporated in invectives, plainly announced that the more interesting part of the sight was approaching. Accordingly, the chapters, curates, and bishops, the pages and chamberlains of the king, the magistrates of the city, and the gentlemen of the royal chamber, passed before the delighted eyes of the people; after which came the king himself, following the splendid statue of the Virgin, with his head bared, and a lighted taper in his hand.

The contrast was striking; after the grayheaded monks and pale novices came young and gaily dressed officers, following the procession with evident weariness, casting their eyes up to the pretty faces adorning the casements which they passed, and interrupting the holy psalms with very unorthodox conversation.

"Have you remarked, my dear Doria, with what apelike grace the old Marchioness of Acquaspara takes her glass of ice?"

"Her nose makes it grow pale. But what fair bird is that who clears the way before her?"

"It is the Cyrenean."

"Who, say you? I never read that name in the golden book."

"That is she, assisting the poor marquis to carry his cross."

The profane allusion of the officer was lost in a long murmur of admiration, which suddenly arose among the crowd, and all eyes were fixed upon one of the young girls who were scattering flowers before the Madonna. She was indeed a ravishing creature. Her head beamed with intellect. Her hair, as black as jet, and as smooth as velvet, fell in ringlets around her shoulders; her brow was as white as alabaster, and as polished as a mirror; her fine brown eyebrows, beautifully arched, were placed on the opal of her temples; her eyelashes were half closed, and their black fringe veiled a look of divine emotion; and her small and straight nose gave to her whole profile that character of classical beauty which is rapidly disappearing from the world. A serene smile — one of those ineffable smiles which seem to have just left the soul, and hardly to have reached the lips — played upon her mouth with an expression of happiness and peace. Nothing could be more perfect than the

chin, which terminated the irreproachable oval of this radiant creature's face; her pure white neck, joined to her breast with a beautiful bend, supported her head with grace, like the stalk of a flower, waved by a light breeze.

A corset of crimson velvet, worked with gold, set off her fine bust to the best advantage, from which descended the thousand folds of an ample petticoat, falling to her feet, like the severe robes with which the Byzantine painters have chosen to clothe their angels. She was truly a lovely creature, and no man there present had ever before looked upon such modest and perfect beauty.

Amongst those who gazed upon this lovely vision with the greatest earnestness, was the young Prince of Brancaleone, one of the first nobility of the kingdom. Handsome, wealthy, and brave, he had at twenty years of age surpassed all the known Don Juans of the day in the number and variety of his amours. The young ladies of fashion professed to abhor, and secretly adored him; the most virtuous among them were compelled to fly from his presence, as all resistance seemed impossible; and the harebrained young courtiers had unanimously chosen him as their model. To give an idea, in one word, of this fortunate personage, it will be sufficient for our readers to know that in matters of seduction the devil could not have formed anything more perfect, even in this progressive age.

The prince was muffled up for the occasion, in a sufficiently grotesque costume, which he wore with an air of ironical gravity. A black satin doublet, short breeches, embroidered hose, and shoes with gold buckles, formed the principal part of his habiliments; and above these he wore a robe of brocade, lined with ermine, and having long sleeves, and a splendid diamond-hilted sword at his

side. By a distinction granted to his rank, he was permitted to carry one of the six gilded poles which sustained the royal canopy.

While the procession was moving forward, Eligi di Brancaleone cast a side look upon a little man, as red as a lobster, and with a face covered with seams, who walked almost by his side, holding his Excellency's hat in his hand, with as much solemnity as was in his power.

We request the permission of our readers to interrupt our story, to give a short biographical sketch of this personage.

Trespolo was born of poor parents, but thieves; and it was owing to this cause that he was early left an orphan. At liberty as to his future prospects, he studied life under an eminently social point of view. If a certain ancient philosopher is to be believed, we are all sent into the world to solve a problem; as for him, he wished to do nothing, — that was Trespolo's problem. By turns sexton, juggler, apothecary's boy, and cicerone, he was successively disgusted with all these employments. A beggar's life was, in his opinion, too much work, and he thought it infinitely more troublesome to be a thief than an honest man. After much reflection he decided in favour of contemplative philosophy. He dearly loved the horizontal position, and his greatest pleasure in the world was to study the stars. Unfortunately, however, the good man found himself one fine day, in the midst of his meditations, in great danger of dying of hunger; which would certainly have been very annoying, as he had almost accustomed himself to dispense with eating altogether.

But, probably because he was predestined to play a little part in our story, God rescued him this time, and

sent to his aid, not one of his angels, — the rogue was not worthy of such assistance, — but a dog belonging to Brancaleone's pack of hounds. The noble animal smelt out the philosopher, and gave utterance to a charitable growl, which would have done honour to his brethren at Mount Saint-Bernard. The prince, who was returning triumphantly from the chase, having had upon that day the double fortune to kill a bear and to ruin a countess, had the unusual fancy to do a good action. He approached the prostrate form of the clown, by this time almost a corpse, raised the wretched object upon his feet, and, seeing that there was still some hope of his life, he ordered his attendants to take him with them.

From that day Trespolo saw the dream of his life gradually realised. A little more than a menial, a little less than major-domo, he became his master's confidant, who extracted the principal part of his talents for his use; for Trespolo had the cunning of a demon, and almost the slyness of a woman, in his breast. The prince, who had acutely guessed that this genius was idle in his nature, asked only his advice; and truly he was well qualified to give it.

Nevertheless, as nothing is perfect in this world, Trespolo had strange moments, even in this delightful life; occasional panics, which afforded much amusement to his master, interrupted his happiness. At such times he would stammer incoherently, sigh profoundly, and suddenly lose his appetite. In fact, the good man was fearful of damnation. The thing was very simple: at one time he had feared everything, and it had been often preached to him that the devil will not grant a moment's rest to those who have had the misfortune to fall into his clutches.

Trespolo was in one of these moments of repentance

when the prince, after gazing at the young girl with the avidity of a vulture about to pounce upon its prey, asked the advice of his usual counsellor upon the matter. The poor valet instantly understood his master's abominable intention, and not wishing to incur the guilt of a sacrilegious conversation, he opened his eyes widely, and raised them toward heaven with an air of devotion. The prince coughed, stamped his foot, and struck him upon the legs with the hilt of his sword, without obtaining the slightest mark of attention, the object he addressed having the air of a man completely absorbed by celestial reflections. Brancalone felt a strong desire to twist his neck, but both his hands were employed in holding the canopy; besides which, the king was present.

They at length approached the church of Santa Chiara, the burying-place of the Neapolitan monarchs, where several princesses of the blood, exchanging their crowns for veils, have submitted to be immured in a living grave. The nuns, the novices, and the abbess, concealed by the blinds, threw flowers upon the procession from the casements. A bouquet fell at the feet of the Prince of Brancaleone.

"Trespolo, pick up this bouquet," said the prince, in so loud a tone that the domestic had no possible excuse to disobey. "It is from Sister Theresa," continued he, in a lower voice; "there is nowhere greater fidelity than in a convent."

Trespolo picked up the bouquet, and approached his master, with an air of confusion.

"Who is that girl?" inquired he, laconically.

"Which?" stammered the servant.

"*Cospetto!* she who is walking before us."

"I do not know her, monsignor."

"You must contrive to do so before this evening."

"I must go a considerable distance to obey your Excellency's commands."

"You do know her, then, you insupportable rascal? I have a great mind to hang you up like a dog."

"For pity's sake, monsignor, think of your soul's health, reflect upon eternal life."

"I advise you, rather, to think upon your temporal life. What is her name?"

"She is called Nisida; she is the most beautiful girl in the island from which she takes her name. She is innocence itself! Her father is nothing but a poor fisherman; but I can assure your Excellency that in his native place he is respected as a king."

"Indeed!" answered Brancaleone, with an ironical smile. "I confess, to my great shame, that I have never visited the little island of Nisida. You will therefore prepare a boat for to-morrow, and then we shall see."

He stopped suddenly, for the king's eyes were upon him, and continued with an inspired air, in the deepest and most sonorous notes that he could utter, —

"Genitori genitoque laus et jubilatio!"

"Amen," replied the domestic, in an equally loud voice.

Nisida, the beloved daughter of Solomon the fisherman, was, as we have said, the fairest flower in the isle from which she took her name. This island is the most charming place, the most delicious corner with which we are acquainted. It is a casket of verdure placed in the midst of the pure and transparent waters of the bay, a hill covered with orange groves and laurel roses, and having a château of white marble at the top. Around you is spread the magical view of that immense amphitheatre, one of the greatest wonders of the creation.

There lies Naples, the voluptuous siren, carelessly reclining upon the banks of the sea; there Portici, Castellamare, Sorrento, whose names alone bring back a thousand thoughts of poetry and love to the mind; and there Pausilippo, Baja, Pouzzoleo, and those vast plains where the ancients placed their Elysium, — sacred solitudes, which were said still to be peopled by men of other days, when the earth echoed to the sounds of footsteps, like an immense tomb, and the air was filled with unknown sounds and strange melodies.

Solomon's house was upon that side of the island from which, turning your back to the capital, the blue crests of Capreæ may be seen in the distance. Nothing could be more simple and more gay. The brick walls were thickly covered with green ivy, and enamelled with white bell-flowers; the ground-floor consisted of one large room, in which the men and family took their meals; on the first floor was the virgin chamber of Nisida, lighted by one window, looking out upon the bay; above this chamber was a terrace, after the Italian style, with its four pillars festooned with vine-leaves, and its large parapet covered with moss and wild flowers. A little hawthorn hedge, held in the utmost veneration, traced a kind of rampart round the fisherman's property, which protected his house better than could deep ditches or embattled walls. The boldest roisterers in the neighbourhood would have preferred fighting in front of the parsonage, or in the church-porch itself, rather than in the neighbourhood of Solomon's little court. It was, nevertheless, the place of meeting for the whole island. Every evening, at the same hour, the good women of the vicinity came together to work their woollen caps, and indulge in friendly gossip. Groups of little sunburnt children enjoyed their diversions, rolling upon

the green turf, and throwing handfuls of sand in one another's eyes, while their mothers gave themselves up to the serious discussion of trifles which characterises village conversation. Thus they assembled every evening before the fisherman's dwelling, — a silent and almost involuntary homage, consecrated by custom and complained of by none.

The ascendency which the aged Solomon possessed over his equals had been gained in so simple and natural a way that no fault could be found with it. His power had increased from day to day without any one remarking it, unless indeed it were to notice the advantage which it brought them, in the same manner as men do not perceive the growth of trees until they can repose beneath the branches. If any dispute arose in the island, the two adversaries invariably preferred having it settled by the fisherman's decision to putting it into the hands of the law; and he generally had the good fortune or the talent to send away the parties contented. He could prescribe remedies better than any doctor; for it seldom happened that himself or some one of his family had not experienced the same malady which he proposed to cure; and his science, based upon his own experience, was generally attended with the happiest results. Besides this, he had no interest, like ordinary medical men, in prolonging the illness of his patients.

For a number of years the only recognised formality, guaranteeing the inviolability of a contract in the island, was the intervention of the fisherman. The two parties joined hands in Solomon's presence, and that was enough. They would rather have thrown themselves into Vesuvius, in the midst of its greatest eruption, than have broken so solemn an engagement. At the time in which our story commences, it was impossible

to discover a person in the island who had not experienced the effects of the fisherman's generosity, — and that, too, without being compelled to make known his wants. As it was customary for the humble people of Nisida to pass their hours of recreation in front of Solomon's cottage, the old man, while walking slowly in the midst of them, humming his favourite tunes, would draw from them their moral and physical infirmities; and the same evening they might make certain to see either himself or his daughter arrive at their homes, to give a benefit to every misery, a balm to every wound. In short, he monopolised to himself all the employments meant to assist humanity. Lawyers, doctors, and notaries, all who prey upon civilisation, beat a retreat before the patriarchal benevolence of the fisherman.

The day after that of the Assumption, Solomon, according to his custom, was seated upon a stone in front of his house, his legs crossed, and his arms hanging carelessly by his sides. At the first glance, his age would not have been estimated at more than sixty, although he was in reality upwards of eighty. He retained all his teeth, as white as pearls. His forehead, calm, serene, and unwrinkled, crowned with hair of silvery whiteness, had the firmness and polish of marble; and the sparkling glance of his blue eye revealed a freshness of mind and an everlasting youth, such as fable assigns to sea gods. He exposed his bare arms and muscular neck with an old man's pride. No gloomy thought or stinging remorse disturbed the long and peaceful course of his existence. He had never seen a tear shed around him without hastening to wipe it away; poor as he was, he had managed to bestow benefits which all the kings of the earth could not have repaid him with their gold; ignorant as he was, he had

spoken to his equals the only language which they understood, the language of the heart. One bitter drop alone had been mingled with this inexhaustible stream of happiness; one grief alone had obscured his sunny days with a cloud; this was his wife's death, whom he had not yet forgotten.

All the affection of his soul was lavished upon Nisida, whose birth had been the cause of her mother's death; he loved her with that passionate love which old men feel for the youngest of their children. At this moment he was gazing upon her with the deepest tenderness, and following her with his eyes, as she came and went amongst the groups of children, gently reproving them when their games were too dangerous or noisy, and then, seating herself among their mothers, took part in their conversation with serious and thoughtful interest. Nisida was still more beautiful than upon the preceding day; with the perfumed cloud which had covered her from head to foot, had disappeared all that mystical romance which had drawn all eyes in admiration upon her. She was once more a daughter of Eve, without any diminution of her charms. Simply attired, as upon working-days, there was nothing in her appearance to distinguish her from her companions, excepting her great beauty and the transparent whiteness of her skin. Her beautiful black tresses were confined by a little chased silver bodkin, recently imported from Paris, by right of the supremacy which the fair Parisians hold upon the fashions of all countries, as the English possess the dominion of the sea.

Nisida was adored by her young friends, and all their mothers had proudly adopted her; she was the glory of the island. The belief in her superiority was so general amongst the people that if any one had the boldness to

speak too highly of his pretensions, he became the jest of all his comrades. The most renowned dancers of the tarantella were put out of countenance by Solomon's daughter, and dared not dance in her presence. It sometimes happened that singers from Amalfi or Sorrento, drawn there by the beauty of the angelic creature, ventured to breathe their passion in song, taking care to veil it by the most delicate allusions. But they rarely reached the last couplet of their serenade, for at the slightest noise they would suddenly stop, throw down their triangles and guitars, and fly away like startled nightingales.

One only had sufficient courage to brave the jeerings of his companions; his name was Bastiano, the most renowned diver in the island. He sang also, but his voice was deep and hollow; his songs were melancholy, and his melodies filled with sadness. He sang without any accompaniment, and never went away until his lay was concluded. Upon this day, he was even more gloomy than usual; he remained fixed, as if by enchantment, upon a bare and slippery rock, and cast a look of contempt upon the women who were jesting at his ill-temper. The sun, which was sinking into the sea, like a globe of fire, threw its light upon his stern features, as, absorbed by melancholy thoughts, he sang, in the melodious language of his country, these plaintive words: —

"O window! who gleamest in the darkness like a half-opened eye, how gloomy you look! Alas! alas! my poor sister is sick!

"Her mother bends over me in tears, and says to me: 'Your poor sister is dead and buried.'

"Jesus! Jesus! have pity upon me; you pierce me to the heart.

"Tell me, my neighbours, how it came to pass; repeat to me her last words."

"She had a burning thirst, and refused to drink, because you were not near to offer her water from your hand."

"O my sister! my sister!"

"She refused her mother's kiss, because you were not near to embrace her."

"O my sister! my sister!"

"She wept until her last sigh, because you were not near to wipe away her tears."

"O my sister! my sister!"

"We have put a crown of orange-blossoms upon her brow, we have covered her with a snow-white veil; we had laid her calmly on her bier."

"Thanks, my kind neighbours; I will go to rejoin her."

"Two angels descended from heaven, and carried her with them on their wings. The holy Virgin received her at the gates of Paradise."

"Thanks, my kind neighbours; I will go to rejoin her."

"They seated her upon a bank of light; they gave her a necklace of rubies, and she sang her rosary with the Virgin."

"Thanks, my kind neighbours; I go to rejoin her."

And thus concluding his melancholy lay, he suddenly precipitated himself from the rock, upon which he was seated, into the sea, as though he really meant to destroy himself. Nisida, and the other women present, screamed with terror, for the diver remained for several minutes without coming to the surface.

"Are you turned foolish?" cried a young man, who suddenly made his appearance amongst the women, without any one noticing his presence. "Why should you be frightened? You know well enough that Bastiano never does anything else. Be calm; all the fish in the Mediterranean will be drowned before he will. Water is his natural element. Good-day, my sister; good-day, my father."

The young fisherman kissed Nisida upon the forehead, approached his father, and, bending his handsome head before him, at the same time doffing his red cap, respectfully kissed his father's hand. In this manner he came every evening to ask the old man's blessing, before setting out to sea, where he frequently passed the whole night, fishing in his boat.

"God bless you, my Gabriel!" said the old man, tenderly, passing his hand through his son's black and curly hair, while a tear rolled down his cheek.

Then rising, he addressed the groups who surrounded him, with a voice full of dignity and calmness: —

"Now, my children, it is time to separate, — the young to work, the aged to repose. Hark! the *angelus* is sounding."

They all knelt down, and after a short prayer retired to their own homes. Nisida, after paying her father the last attentions of the day, went up to her room, and replenishing the lamp which burnt day and night before the Virgin, she leant upon her casement, and putting aside the branches of jasmine, which formed a scented curtain to her window, she looked out upon the sea, and seemed buried in a deep and pleasing reverie.

At this same time a little boat, rowed by two men, landed at the opposite side of the island. The night was by this time entirely fallen. A little man first carefully got out, and offered his hand respectfully to another person, who, disdaining this feeble support, leapt lightly to the ground.

"Well, rascal," cried he, "how do you think I look?"

"Monsignor is perfect."

"I flatter myself that I am. That the metamorphosis may be the more startling I have chosen the most ragged dress which ever adorned a Jew's shop with its tatters."

"Monsignor has the appearance of a pagan god in quest of an adventure. Jupiter has put up his thunderbolt, and Apollo deposited his rays in his pockets."

"Truce to mythology; and, at the same time, I forbid you to call me 'Monsignor.'"

"Yes, monsignor."

"If the investigations I made during the day are correct, the house ought to be upon the other side of the island, in the most solitary and out-of the-way corner. Walk to a certain distance, and do not trouble yourself about me, for I know my part by heart."

The young Prince of Brancaleone, whom our readers have already recognised, in spite of the darkness of the night, walked toward the fisherman's house, making as little noise as possible, and, after making a thorough observation of the place which he meant to attack, he waited patiently until the moon should light up the scene which he had prepared. He was not doomed to wait long, for the darkness gradually disappeared, and Solomon's cottage became bathed in silver light.

He then approached with a timid step, raised his eyes to the casement with a suppliant look, and began to sigh with all the power of his lungs. The young maiden, thus suddenly aroused from her reflections by this singular-looking personage, drew back quickly, and began to close the shutters of her window.

"Stay, charming Nisida!" cried the prince, like a man overpowered by irresistible passion.

"What do you wish with me, signor?" replied the young girl, astonished at being thus addressed by her name.

"To adore you, as the Madonna is adored, and to try to make you compassionate my sufferings."

Nisida looked earnestly at him, and after some moments of reflection, as if some sudden thought had struck her, she suddenly inquired, —

"Are you of this island, or a stranger?"

"I arrived in this island," replied the prince, without hesitation, "when the sun took its farewell of earth, and dipped into the placid sea."

"And who are you?" continued the young girl, understanding nothing from these fine words.

"Alas! I am but a poor student, although I may one day become a great poet, like Tasso, whose verses you have often heard sung by the departing fishermen, as they waft their last adieus from the ocean to the shore."

"I know not if I do wrong in speaking to you; but I will at least be frank with you," said Nisida, blushing; "I have the misfortune to be the daughter of the richest man in the island."

"Your father will not be inflexible," replied the poet, with warmth; "one word from you, light of my soul and idol of my heart, and I will labour night and day, without cessation, to render myself worthy of possessing the treasure which God has revealed to my dazzled eyes; and, poor and obscure as I am, I shall become rich and powerful."

"I have listened too long to words which a young girl ought to be deaf to; permit me, signor, to retire."

"Have pity upon me, my cruel enemy! What have I done that you should leave me thus, with despair in my soul? You know not that for several months I have followed you about like a shadow, that my nights are spent in roaming round your house, stifling my sighs lest they should disturb your peaceful slumbers. You dread, perhaps, to allow yourself to be softened, at the first interview, by an unfortunate who adores you.

Alas! Juliet was young and fair as you, and she was not long in having pity upon Romeo."

Nisida cast a sad and thoughtful look upon the handsome young man who was talking so sweetly to her, and retired without any further reply, in order not to increase his misery.

The prince found great difficulty in overcoming a violent disposition to laugh; and, quite satisfied with his beginning, he returned to the place where he had left his servant.

The young girl did not close her eyes the whole night, after the conversation which she had had with the stranger. His sudden appearance, his strange dress, and fine language had aroused a strange sentiment which had slumbered at the bottom of her heart. She was then in all the bloom of her youth and the splendour of her beauty. Nisida did not possess one of those feeble and fearing natures broken by suffering, or blighted by despotic tyranny. Far from this being the case, all that surrounded her had contributed to render her calm and serene; her tender and artless mind was developed in an atmosphere of happiness and peace. If she had never been loved until then, it was not to be attributed to coldness, but to the excessive timidity of the inhabitants of the island. The blind and deep respect with which the old fisherman was surrounded, had marked a circle of reverence and submission around his daughter which no one dared to endeavour to break through. By hard labour and rigid economy Solomon had amassed sufficient wealth to soften the poverty of the other fishermen. None had asked Nisida from him, for no one believed himself worthy of possessing her. The only one of her adorers who had dared to show his love for her openly was Bastiano, Gabriel's dearest and

most devoted friend, but Bastiano did not please her at all. Confident in her beauty, and held up by some mysterious hope which never abandons youth, she resolved to wait, like a king's daughter who expects her bridegroom from a strange country.

Upon Assumption-day she had left her native home for the first time in her life, fate having appointed her one of the young girls dedicated by their mothers to the special service of the Virgin. But, overcome by a part so new to her, blushing and confused, from the looks of an immense crowd, she had scarcely dared to raise her astonished eyes, and the beauties of the city had passed before her like a dream, of which she retained but a vague remembrance.

When she saw the handsome young man under her window, with his elegant and graceful shape and his noble air, contrasting so strongly with the timidity and awkwardness of her other lovers, she felt an inward pain stealing over her, and she would doubtless have believed that her prince had at length arrived, if she had not been disagreeably struck by the poverty of his dress. Nevertheless, she listened for a long time for his return, and retired with flushed cheeks and an oppressed breast; the poor girl would have died with terror had she known the truth.

"If my father does not wish me to marry," said she to herself, agitated by the first remorse of her life, "it would be ungrateful in me to speak of it; but he is so handsome!"

Then kneeling down before the Virgin, who was her only confidant, the poor girl having never known a mother, she endeavoured to express in words the torments of her mind; but she found that she could never reach the conclusion of her prayer. Conflicting thoughts

perplexed her mind, and she found herself pronouncing words which had no reference to her subject. She however rose from her knees with a heart more at rest, and decided upon confiding all to her father.

"I have no reason to doubt my father's affection for a moment," said she to herself, as she prepared for rest. "Well, then! if he forbids me to speak of him, it will be for my own good. At any rate, it is the first time that ever I saw him," continued she, throwing herself upon her bed, "and now that I recollect what took place I was very bold to address him as I did; I have almost a wish to amuse myself with laughing at him. With what assurance he uttered his idle tales; how ridiculously he rolled his eyes about, — and yet how handsome are his eyes, his mouth, his forehead, and his hair! How is it that I cannot go to sleep? Why does this young man's face thus haunt me? I do not wish to see him more!" cried she, covering her head with the bedclothes in childish anger. She then began to laugh at her lover's dress, and reflected deeply how she should tell her companions of what had happened. Suddenly her face became sad, a frightful thought stole over her mind, and she trembled from head to foot: "If he should find another more beautiful than myself; men are such deceivers! How warm it is! I am sure I shall not be able to sleep all night."

She continued in this manner changing from hopes to fears, until the first ray of morning, shining through the jasmine-branches which shaded her window, quivered upon the walls of the room. Then hastily rising, she presented herself as usual before her father, to receive his parental kiss. The old man instantly noticed the languor and fatigue which a sleepless night had rendered visible upon his daughter's face, and

inquired anxiously, as he removed the beautiful black hair which half concealed her cheeks.

"What ails you, my daughter? You have not slept well?"

"I have not slept at all," answered Nisida, smiling to reassure her father; "but I have a confession to make."

"Speak on quickly, my daughter; I die of impatience."

"Perhaps I have done wrong, but I know well before I begin that you will promise not to chide me."

"I fear you know too well that I spoil you," said the old man, caressing her; "but I will not begin to be severe with you to-day."

"A young man who is not of this island, whose name I do not know, spoke to me last night, as I was taking the air at my casement."

"And what had he to say to you, my dear Nisida?"

"He begged me to speak to you in his favour."

"Say on, then. What can I do for him?"

"Command me to become his wife."

"And would you willingly obey?"

"Yes, father, I think I should," answered the girl, candidly; "but you will settle it yourself, according to your wisdom, for I determined to tell all to you before becoming acquainted with him, that I might not carry on a conversation of which you would disapprove. But is there any objection?"

"You know that I am not yet aware whether he is actuated by a desire to make my daughter happy."

"He is poor, my father."

"Well, well; for that reason I should not love him less. There is plenty of work here for all, and my table could easily make room for a third child. He is young, has arms, and doubtless some occupation."

"He is a poet."

"No matter; bid him speak to me, and if he is a worthy lad, depend upon me, my child, to do all in my power to hasten your happiness."

Nisida embraced her father with gratitude, and burnt with impatience for the approach of evening, when she might give her lover such delightful intelligence.

Eligi di Brancaleone, it will be believed, was not much flattered with the fisherman's magnanimity in his favour; but he nevertheless feigned to be enchanted with the success of his suit. Not forgetting for a moment the part which he had assumed of an enthusiastic student and poet, he fell upon his knees and eloquently declaimed a fervent thanksgiving to the star of Venus. Then addressing his innocent dupe, he proceeded to inform her more calmly that he would immediately write to his own father, who, at the expiration of a week, would himself make a formal proposal for her hand. Until then he begged not to be presented to Solomon, alleging the shame he felt in appearing in so poor clothes, assuring his betrothed that his father would bring him a complete equipment for his marriage day.

While the unfortunate girl was thus, with such fearful certainty, walking toward the brink of the abyss, Trespolo, according to his master's commands, had taken up his abode in the island as a pilgrim from Jerusalem. Playing his part to admiration, and interlarding his conversation with Biblical phrases, he distributed amulets, pieces of wood from the true cross, and all the inexhaustible treasures which nourish the holy avarice of superstition. These relics were looked upon as the more authentic, from his making no traffic of them; as, supporting his poverty meekly, he pre-

sented them freely to the faithful, refusing all alms in return. He consented, however, on account of the tried virtue of Solomon, to partake of the fisherman's bread; and each day he took his meals at his house with the regularity of a monk. His abstinence astonished every one; a dry crust soaked in water, and a few nuts or figs, were sufficient to support the holy man's life, or, in other words, to prevent him from dying. He amused Nisida with stories of his travels and mysterious prophecies; but unfortunately he never visited them until the evening, as he passed the remainder of the day in macerations and prayers; that is to say, in consoling himself in secret for the frugality which he practised in public, by employing his time by turns in eating, drinking, and sleeping.

On the morning of the seventh day after the promise which the prince had made to the fisherman's daughter, Brancaleone entered his valet's apartment, and, shaking him violently, shouted in his ear, —

"Awake, you odious hedgehog!"

Trespolo suddenly awoke, rubbing his eyes with terror. The dead, peacefully reposing in their coffins, could hardly be more startled by the last trumpet announcing the end of all things than was Trespolo at his master's voice. Fear having however completely dissipated his drowsiness, he sat up on his bed, and inquired with a startled air, —

"What is the matter, your Excellency?"

"The matter is that I will have you flayed alive if you do not overcome your execrable habit of sleeping twenty hours out of the twenty-four."

"I was not asleep, my prince!" cried the domestic, with cool effrontery, leaping at the same time from his bed; "I was only thinking."

"Listen to me," said the prince, sternly; 'you have been, if I remember rightly, in the employment of an apothecary."

"Yes, your Excellency; but I gave it up, my master having had the signal barbarity to employ me in pounding drugs, which tired my arms horribly."

"Here is a phial containing a solution of opium."

"Mercy!" cried Trespolo, falling upon his knees.

"Get up, idiot, and pay attention to what I tell you. This little fool, Nisida, insists upon my speaking to her father. I have made her believe that I am going away to-night, to bring my papers. There is no time to lose. You are intimately acquainted with the fisherman. Manage to introduce this liquor into their wine; but remember that your life shall be the forfeit if you put more into the dose than is necessary to produce a deep sleep. Take care to have a good ladder in readiness to-night, after which await my coming in my boat, where you will find Numa and Bonaroux. These are my commands. I shall have no need of your assistance in the attack. I had my dagger of Campo Basso."

"But, monsignor," began Trespolo, thunderstruck.

"No difficulties," cried the prince, stamping his foot violently, "or, by my father's death, I will rid you of your scruples for once and for all." And he turned upon his heel, with the manner of a man who knew that his orders would be obeyed.

The unfortunate Trespolo fulfilled his master's injunctions to the letter. He obeyed, nevertheless, in the most overwhelming terror. Upon that evening the fisherman's supper passed off sadly, notwithstanding the attempts of the pretended pilgrim to enliven it with forced gaiety. Nisida was filled with grief at her lover's departure; and Solomon, sharing his daughter's

low spirits, had swallowed only a few mouthfuls of wine, in compliance with the repeated entreaties of his guest. Gabriel had set off upon that morning for Sorrento, accompanied by Bastiano, and was not expected back for two or three days: and his son's absence increased the old man's sadness. As soon as Trespolo had retired, the fisherman, overcome by fatigue, gave way to sleep; and Nisida, with her arms hanging at her sides, and her head aching and giddy, had scarcely strength to go up to her room, and, after mechanically lighting her lamp, to throw herself upon her bed, where she lay as pale and stiff as a corpse.

The storm raged furiously, — one of those dreadful storms only to be witnessed in the South, when the amassed clouds, suddenly bursting, discharge such torrents of rain and hail upon the earth that a second deluge appears to be approaching. The rolling of the thunder came nearer and nearer, until it resembled the noise of a cannonade. The bay, usually so calm and unruffled that the island seemed as though it looked upon its own beauties in a mirror, became suddenly black, and immense waves hurled themselves furiously against the shore; so that the whole island seemed to tremble beneath their terrible shocks. The most intrepid fishermen had drawn their boats on land, and, shut up in their cabins, were endeavouring, as well as they could, to reassure their wives and frightened children.

In the midst of the profound darkness which reigned upon the sea, the lamp which Nisida had left burning before the Madonna might have been seen shining bright and clear in the increasing gloom.

Two boats, without rudder, sails, or oars, were at this time tossing about in the waves and beaten by the tempestuous wind; in each of these boats stood a man

with his breast bare and hair waving in the gale. They held by each other's hands to keep their boats together, looking upon the sea with firm hearts, and braving the tempest gallantly.

"Once again," cried one of these men, "let me try, Gabriel; and I warrant that, with my two broken oars, and a little perseverance, I shall gain Torre before morning."

"You are mad, Bastiano; this whole day we had but reached as far as Vico, and have been obliged to run on shore; not even your strength and courage can do anything against this fearful hurricane, which has driven us back almost to our starting-place."

"It is the first time that you ever refused to accompany me," remarked the young man.

"I confess it, my dear Bastiano; I do not know why, but to-night I feel drawn toward the island by some irresistible power. The winds are unchained to render our rowing useless; and I declare to you, although you may think me mad in doing so, that I cannot help recognising a command from heaven in this simple and usual circumstance. Do you see that lamp gleaming yonder in the distance?"

"I know it," answered Bastiano, stifling a sigh.

"That lamp was lighted before the Virgin upon the day of my sister's birth, and for eighteen years it has been kept burning night and day. It was my mother's wish. You know not, my dear Bastiano, you cannot know, how many saddening thoughts that wish recalls to my mind. My poor mother summoned me to her death-bed, and told me a fearful story, a horrible mystery, which weighs upon my soul like lead, and from which I can never ease myself by confiding it to a friend. When her dreadful tale was finished, she

demanded to see and embrace my new-born sister, and then attempted with her own trembling hand to light the lamp we speak of. 'Remember,' — these were her last words, — 'remember, Gabriel, that your sister is devoted to the Madonna. So long as this lamp shall continue burning before the holy image, your sister shall remain secure from all dangers.' You can now understand why, whenever we two are out upon the bay, my eyes are always fixed upon that lamp. I have a belief that no evil will happen to her as long as it continues burning, but upon the day on which it is extinguished, on that same day my sister's soul will take its flight to heaven."

"Well," cried Bastiano, in a blunt voice, which was intended to conceal the emotion of his heart, "if you prefer remaining, I will go alone."

"Adieu!" said Gabriel, letting go of his comrade's hand, without turning his eyes away from the light, to which he felt himself attracted by a fascination which he could not explain. Bastiano disappeared, and Nisida's brother, assisted by the waves, rapidly approached nearer and nearer to the shore. Suddenly he uttered a terrible cry, which was heard above all the noise of the tempest.

The light had disappeared; the lamp was extinguished.

"My sister is dead!" cried Gabriel; and, plunging into the sea, he fought his way through the billows with the rapidity of a thunderbolt.

The storm redoubled in violence; long flashes of lightning, bursting from the overcharged clouds, illumined the wild scene with fitful and intermittent splendour. The fisherman, perceiving a ladder placed against the wall of their dwelling, seized it with a convulsive grasp, and in three bounds was in his sister's chamber.

The prince had felt a singular emotion in breaking into this chaste and silent retreat. The calm and placid look of the Virgin, who seemed to be partaking the repose of the sleeping girl, the spirit of innocence which pervaded the virginal couch, the lamp watching in the midst of darkness, like a soul in prayer, had all combined to introduce a hitherto unknown anxiety into the seducer's breast. Enraged by what he termed a contemptible absurdity, he extinguished the lamp, and was advancing toward the bed, reproaching himself with his weakness, when Gabriel rushed upon him with the fury of a wounded tiger.

Brancaleone, with a rapid and bold movement, which proved him to be a man of unusual bravery and address, shaking off the grasp of his robust adversary, drew a long and glittering poniard with his right hand. Gabriel smiled disdainfully, plucked it out of his hand, and having broken it over his knee, felled him to the ground with a tremendous blow upon the head; then, casting a look of intense anxiety upon his poor sister, in the dubious glare of a flash of lightning, —

"Dead!" cried he, wringing his hands in despair, "dead!"

In the frightful paroxysm, which almost choked him, he could find no other words with which to express his fury or pour out his misery. His hair, which hung matted over his cheeks, with exposure to the rain, actually crept with horror; the marrow in his bones turned cold, and he felt tears falling from his heart. It was a terrible moment, — a moment in which his overwhelming misery made him forget that the assassin was yet alive.

In the mean time, the prince, whose admirable coolness had not failed him for a moment, rose from the ground, bleeding and bruised. Pale, and trembling

with rage, he sought on all sides for a weapon with which he could revenge himself. Gabriel approached him, more gloomy and furious than before, and, seizing him by the neck with a grasp of iron, he dragged him into the chamber occupied by the old man.

"My father! Oh, my father!" cried he, in a heart-rending voice, "up and behold the villain who has assassinated Nisida!"

The old man, who had fortunately drunk but little of the soporific potion, was awakened by this cry, which pierced him to the soul; he sprang from his bed, threw on a part of his clothes, and with that promptitude of action with which God has endowed parents in moments of extremity, he ascended to his daughter's room, struck a light, and, kneeling down by the side of the bed, he began feeling her pulse, and watching her respiration with mortal anxiety.

All this had passed in less time than it has taken us to tell it. Brancaleone, by a desperate effort, had escaped from the fisherman's grasp; and, suddenly regaining his princely dignity, he said in a loud voice, —

"You will not slay without hearing me."

Gabriel in vain endeavoured to reply in words of hatred and revenge; his tongue refused to do its office, and he melted into tears.

"Your sister is not dead," said the prince, with cold dignity; "she is but asleep. You may go and assure yourself of the truth of what I say; and during your absence I pledge you my honour that I will not move a step from this place."

These words were pronounced with such an accent of truth that the fisherman was struck by them. A ray of unexpected hope suddenly illumined his face; but he continued to throw looks of hatred and mistrust upon the stranger, and murmured in a hollow voice, —

"Do not flatter yourself, — whether or no, you do not escape me."

He then went up to his sister's room, and approached the old man, trembling from head to foot.

"Well, my father?"

Solomon gently pushed him from the bedside with a mother's solicitude who drives away some buzzing insect from her infant's cradle, and, signing to him to be silent, he answered in a low whisper: —

"She is neither dead nor poisoned; some one has given her a philter to drink, with a sinister design. Her respiration is regular, and she will not be long in waking from her lethargy."

Gabriel, reassured concerning Nisida's life, descended silently to the ground-floor where he had left the seducer. His attitude was grave and gloomy; he had now come, not to rend his sister's murderer, but to clear up a treacherous and infamous mystery, and to avenge his outraged honour. He opened the folding-doors by which the house was entered; the rain had ceased to descend, and the moon's rays, bursting through the clouds, suddenly penetrated into the room. The fisherman adjusted his disordered dress, dried his hair, advanced toward the stranger, and after looking at him fiercely, —

"Now," said he, "you will explain to me the reason of your presence in our house."

"I confess," said the prince, in an easy tone, and with the most insolent coolness, "that appearances are against me. It is the fate of lovers to be treated like thieves; but, although I have not the pleasure of being known to you, you will find that I am the betrothed of your fair sister, Nisida, with the consent of your father. Unhappily, I have the misfortune to have parents who

have had the cruelty to refuse their consent; love blinded me, and I was guilty of a fault to which a young man like you ought to be indulgent; at the most, it was but a simple scheme to carry her off, with the best intentions in the world, I assure you, and I am quite ready to repair everything, if you will then consent to hold out your hand and call me your brother."

"Call you my brother, villain and traitor!" answered Gabriel, whose cheek glowed at hearing his sister spoken of with such insolence; "if it is thus that injuries and insults are revenged in town, we fishermen have a different plan to show you. Ah! you flattered yourself you would succeed in carrying desolation and shame into our house; by paying infamous wretches to come and eat the bread of an old man, and to poison his daughter in return; by creeping in the darkness of night, armed with a poniard like a brigand, into my sister's chamber; and by hoping to leave it accompanied by the most beautiful woman in the kingdom."

The prince made a movement of impatience.

"Listen," continued Gabriel, "I could this instant destroy you in the same manner as I have broken your dagger; but I take pity upon you. I perceive well that you cannot employ your hands either for your subsistence or your defence. Pshaw! I begin to understand you: you boast yourself my master; you have usurped your poverty, but you are not worthy of it."

He threw upon the prince a look of withering scorn, then, approaching a cupboard concealed in the wall, he drew from it a hatchet and a musket.

"Here," said he, "are all the arms in the house; choose."

A glance of pleasure shot from the eyes of the prince, who had until then been devoured with compressed pas-

sion; he eagerly seized the gun, and, stepping back three paces, recovering all his dignity at the same time, —

"You would have done well," said he, "to lend me this weapon at once; for then I should have been spared the fatigue of listening to your absurd vagaries and frantic convulsions. Thanks, young man; I will give directions to one of my servants to restore you your property. Adieu; here is something for your trouble."

And he threw him a purse, which fell heavily at the fisherman's feet.

"I lent you that gun to defend yourself with," said Gabriel, motionless with astonishment.

"Make room, my lad; you are drunk," said the prince, taking a step toward the door.

"You refuse then to defend yourself?" inquired Gabriel, resolutely.

"I have already said that I cannot fight with you."

"And why not?"

"Because God has so willed it; because you were born to cringe, and I to trample you beneath my feet; because all the blood which I could shed upon this island would not recompense me for the loss of a single drop of mine; because the lives of a thousand wretches, such as you, would not be worth an hour of mine; because you will throw yourself upon your knees at the very name which I am about to pronounce; finally, because you are but a poor fisherman, and I am the Prince of Brancaleone."

At this well-known name, which the young nobleman had uttered with the expectation of humbling his opponent to the dust, the fisherman started convulsively. He breathed freely, as if some overwhelming weight which had long oppressed his heart had been suddenly removed.

"Ah!" cried he, "are you at length in my power, monsignor? Between the poor fisherman and the mighty prince there is a debt of blood. You shall pay for yourself and for your father. We will now settle our accounts, your Excellency," continued he, raising his hatchet above the prince's head, who presented the gun, which he held in his hand, to defend himself.

"Oh! you were too hasty in your choice; the weapon is not loaded."

The prince turned pale.

"There exists between our two families," continued Gabriel, "a horrible mystery, which my mother confided to me upon the brink of the tomb, of which my father himself is ignorant, and which no man on earth shall ever know. With you it is different, for you are about to die."

He dragged him into the courtyard.

"Do you know why my sister, she whose dishonour you have been planning, was devoted to the service of the Madonna? It was because your father wished to effect for my mother what you in your turn have attempted upon the daughter. There is in your accursed house an infamous tradition, which I am about to relate to you. You know not what slow and terrible tortures my unfortunate mother endured, — tortures which destroyed her, which brought her to an early grave, and which her angelic soul dared to confide to her son only at the moment of its departure, and even then only that the relation might make me keep a stricter watch over my sister when she was gone."

The fisherman wiped away a tear, and continued, —

"One day, before my sister or myself was born, a beautiful lady, richly dressed, arrived upon this island in a magnificent boat; she asked to see my mother, who

was in those days as fair as my Nisida now is. She appeared never to grow weary of admiring her, accusing fate of hiding so fine a diamond in such an obscure island. She loaded my mother with praises, gifts, and caresses, and finally requested the leave of her parents to let her accompany her as her companion. The poor people, foreseeing, in the protection of so great a lady, a brilliant prospect for their daughter, had the weakness to consent. That lady was your mother; and the reason she came in search of this poor innocent young girl was this: your mother had a lover, and she wished, by this infamous means, to earn the indulgence of the prince her husband."

"Be silent, wretch!"

"Oh! you must hear me to an end, your Excellency. The first few days my poor mother found herself surrounded with the most tender attentions; the princess was never absent from her for a moment; the most flattering words and the finest clothes were hers, and the domestics respected her as if she had been their master's daughter. When her parents came to visit her, to ask her if she regretted having left them, they found her looking so beautiful and so happy that they blessed the princess as a good angel whom God had sent to them. The prince then began to show a singular affection for my mother, and by degrees his manner became more familiar and caressing. The princess now absented herself for several days, regretting her inability to take her dear child (as she was always termed) with her, where she was going.

"From this time, the prince's brutality knew no bounds; he no longer disguised his shameful project of seduction; he tempted the poor girl with pearl bracelets and diamond necklaces; he passed from the most ardent

passion to the deepest rage, from the humblest prayers to the most horrible threats. They shut up the unfortunate girl in a dungeon, to which but one feeble ray of light found entrance; and a frightful gaoler threw her every morning a piece of black bread for her day's subsistence, swearing to her, every time he thus saw her, that her situation would not be changed until she became the prince's mistress.

"This punishment lasted two years. The princess was gone for a long voyage to foreign countries, and my mother's parents believed their daughter to be still happy in the enjoyment of her protection. Upon her return, having, doubtless, new faults requiring pardon, she reproached the prince with his bad management, she summoned my mother from her dungeon, feigned the most lively indignation at the horrible way in which she had been treated, of which she pretended ignorance, wiped away her tears, and, with a refinement of abominable perfidiousness, she received the thanks of the victim she was about to immolate.

"One evening — I have nearly finished, monsignor — the princess and her companion supped together *tête-à-tête:* the rarest fruits, the most exquisite meats, and the most delicate wines were served to my poor mother, whose long privations had ruined her constitution and weakened her reason. At this supper, they mixed diabolical philters with her drink; it is still a tradition in your family. My mother felt excited; her eyes shone with feverish brightness; her cheeks were flushed as though they were on fire. At this moment the prince entered. Oh! your Excellency has already seen tonight that God protects the poor. My mother flew for refuge, like a frightened dove, upon the princess's bosom, who laughingly repulsed her. The poor girl,

lost, trembling, and in tears, threw herself upon her knees in the middle of that infamous room. It was the day of Saint Anne: suddenly the house shook, the walls cracked, and cries of distress were heard proceeding from the street below. My mother was saved! It was the earthquake, which destroyed the half of Naples. You know well, monsignor, that your old palace was rendered uninhabitable from that day."

"To what does all this lead?" cried Brancaleone, in the greatest agitation.

"Oh! simply to persuade you that you must fight with me," answered the fisherman, coldly, handing him a charge for his gun as he spoke. "And now," continued he, in a higher tone, "pray to God, monsignor; for I warn you that you shall die by my hand; justice must be done!"

The prince carefully examined the powder and balls, convinced himself that his gun was in a fit condition for use, loaded it, and, eager to have the affair settled, took aim at the fisherman; but either from the agitation of his mind caused by his adversary's terrible story, or from the grass being in a slippery condition from the storm of the preceding night, as he advanced his left foot to take more deliberate aim, his foot slipped, and, losing his equilibrium, he fell upon his knee, and the gun was discharged into the air.

"That does not count, monsignor," cried Gabriel, handing him a second charge.

At the noise of the explosion, Solomon appeared at the window, and, instantly understanding to what it related, he raised his hands to heaven, as if addressing a mute and fervent prayer to God.

Eligi swore a fearful oath and reloaded his weapon in haste; but, struck by the young man's boldness, who

remained fixed and motionless before him, by the calm and dignified old man, who seemed to be entreating God, in the name of his paternal authority, to declare himself upon the side of the innocent, disconcerted by his fall, his knees trembling, he felt the coldness of death in his veins. Nevertheless, endeavouring to master his agitation, he fired a second time; the ball whistled past the fisherman's ear, and buried itself in the trunk of a poplar-tree.

The prince grasped the barrel of the gun in both hands with despairing energy; but Gabriel advanced armed with his hatchet, and at the first blow, cut the butt-end completely off. He hesitated, however, to slay a defenceless man, and was in uncertainty how to act, when two armed servants appeared at the end of the road. Gabriel had not observed their approach; but when the two traitors had almost reached him, Solomon uttered a cry, and rushed to his son's rescue.

"Help, Numa! help, Bonaroux! death to the brigands! they wish to assassinate me!" cried the prince.

"You lie, Prince of Brancaleone," cried Gabriel, and with one blow of his hatchet he clove his adversary's skull.

The two bravoes, who had arrived to defend their master, took to flight upon seeing him fall. Solomon and his son went up to Nisida's room. The young girl at that moment awoke from her deep sleep; her brow was covered with sweat, and she slowly opened her eyes upon their entrance.

"Why do you look on me so earnestly, my father?" said she, with a look of bewilderment, passing her hand across her forehead.

The old man embraced her tenderly.

"You have this night escaped from a great danger,

my poor Nisida," said he; "get up and let us return thanks to the Madonna."

Accordingly, the father and his two children, prostrating themselves before the image of the holy Virgin, began reciting the litany.

But at the same moment the sound of arms was heard in the courtyard, the house was filled with soldiers, and a lieutenant of gendarmerie, seizing Gabriel, addressed him loudly in these words: —

"In the name of the law I arrest you for the murder committed by you upon the person of his most illustrious Excellency, the Prince of Brancaleone."

Nisida, upon hearing these fearful words, became as pale and motionless as a marble statue. Gabriel was preparing himself for a desperate and useless resistance, when he was stopped by a gesture from his father.

"*Signor tenente*," said the old man, addressing himself to the officers, "my son has killed the prince in lawful defence; last night he scaled the wall and entered our house with a dagger in his hand. The proofs are before your eyes. There is the ladder placed against the window, and here," continued he, picking up two pieces of broken steel, "is a dagger engraved with the arms of Brancaleone. Nevertheless, we do not refuse to follow you."

The last words of the fisherman were drowned in cries of "Down with the *sbirri!* down with the gendarmes!" which were repeated upon all sides. The whole island was in arms, and the fishermen would have spilt their heart's blood before they would have allowed a single hair of Solomon or of his son to be injured.

But the old man appeared upon the threshold of his door, and, stretching out his arms with a calm and grave gesture, which instantly calmed the fury of the people, —

"Thanks, my children," said he; "the law must be respected. I will myself defend my son's innocence before the judges."

Three months have scarcely passed, from the day when we first saw the old fisherman seated at the door of his house, himself happy in the happiness which he had diffused around him, throned like a king upon his rock, and blessing his two children, the fairest of the island. All is now changed in the fate of this once fortunate and envied man. The little smiling cottage, which hung over the beautiful bay, like a swan upon the banks of a transparent river, is sad and desolate; the courtyard, surrounded with its hawthorn hedge, is silent and deserted, and the happy groups who resorted to the fisherman's home at the close of the day are there no more. No noise disturbs the gloom of that mournful solitude, except, toward evening, the murmuring of the waves of the sea, breaking with plaintive sounds upon the strand, as if pitying the misfortunes of that once happy dwelling.

Gabriel is condemned. The news of the death of the noble Prince of Brancaleone, so young, so handsome, and so universally adored, not only agitated the Neapolitan aristocracy, but enraged all classes, from the highest to the lowest. He was mourned by all; and a general cry of vengeance was raised against the murderer.

Nevertheless, the magistrates appointed by their office to try this deplorable affair acted with irreproachable integrity. No consideration foreign to their duty, no regard due to the noble and powerful family of the slain man, could stifle the conviction of their consciences. History has retained the memory of this celebrated trial, and she has no reproach to address to these men which are not equally made to human laws. Appearance, that

fatal instrument with which the genius of evil so frequently controverts the truth, was against the innocent, and the poor fisherman was condemned to die.

Trespolo, whose scruples had all been dissipated by his fears, was first interrogated, as the young prince's confidential domestic; he declared, with cool impudence, that his illustrious master, wishing to rid himself for a few days from the importunities of a young lady whose love began to weary him, had taken up his abode for a short time upon the island of Nisida, with three or four of his most trusted domestics, and that he himself had taken the disguise of a pilgrim, not wishing to betray his Excellency's incognito to the fishermen, who would have beset so powerful a person with their solicitations.

Two rural guards, who were at the time of the murder upon the top of the hill, confirmed the valet's long deposition by their evidence; concealed by the underwood, they had seen Gabriel strike the prince, and had distinctly heard the last words of the dying man calling murder. All the witnesses, not even excepting those who were called in the prisoner's favour, only aggravated his position by their evidence.

It was proved, for the accusation, that the Prince Eligi di Brancaleone, having become disgusted with a town life, had visited the little island of Nisida to enjoy his favourite amusement of fishing (proof being given that the young prince, for the last two years, had always been present at the tunny-fishing upon his estates at Palermo); that, while residing there, Gabriel had recognised him, having seen him a few days before in Naples, where he accompanied his sister to the procession on Assumption-day, and had doubtless formed a scheme to assassinate him. Upon the day preceding the night upon which the crime had been committed, Gabriel's

absence, and his father and sister's agitation had been remarked. Toward evening the prince had dismissed his attendants, to walk alone, as was his usual custom, upon the sea-beach. Surprised by the storm, and not knowing his way about the island, he had wandered round the fisherman's house, in search of an entrance; when Gabriel, encouraged by the darkness, and the noise of the storm, which would drown his victim's cries, after a long hesitation had decided upon committing the crime, and having discharged a gun twice at the unfortunate young man without effecting his object, he had killed him with a blow from a hatchet; that, exactly at the moment when, assisted by Solomon, he was about to throw the corpse into the sea, the prince's retainers having appeared, they went up to the girl's room, and, having planned their incredible story, they knelt before the Virgin, to put on an appearance of innocence in order to render their defence the more probable.

All the circumstances which poor Solomon brought forward in his son's favour turned against him: the ladder placed against Nisida's casement was the property of the fisherman himself; the poniard which young Brancaleone always carried about with him for his defence had been evidently taken after his death, and Gabriel had hastened to break it, to remove, as far as was in his power, the traces of his crime. Bastiano's evidence received no weight: he testified, in order to destroy the proof of the premeditation of the crime, that the prisoner had not left him until the commencement of the storm; but the young diver was known as Gabriel's dearest friend and the boldest suitor for his sister's hand, besides which, at the same hour when he affirmed that he had been in the neigh-

bourhood of Nisida, he had been observed landing at Torre.

As to the prince's passion for the poor peasant-girl, this ridiculous assertion obtained no credence whatever, more especially the resistance attributed to the young girl, and the extreme means resorted to by the prince to weaken her virtue. Eligi di Brancaleone was so young, handsome, and seducing that no one would have ever suspected him of violence, except in getting rid of his mistresses. And, finally, as an overwhelming and unanswerable reply to all the arguments for the defence, a purse of gold, having the arms of Brancaleone worked upon it, was discovered under the fisherman's bed, which the prince had thrown, as our readers will remember, as a last insult, at Gabriel's feet.

The old man was not discouraged at this dreadful conjunction of appearances against him. After the pleadings of the advocates, whose eloquence he had purchased, he himself defended his son, and threw into his speech so much truth, passion, and tears that all present were affected, and three of the judges voted for the prisoner's acquittal; but the majority were against it, and Gabriel was condemned.

This melancholy news spread rapidly through the little island, and caused the deepest grief throughout it. The fishermen, who, upon the first irruption of the military, had taken up arms for the defence of their comrade, submitted without a murmur to the sentence after the affair had been tried. Solomon bore this piercing blow, which passed through his heart like the stroke of a dagger, without a sigh escaping from his breast, without a tear falling from his eyes; his wound did not bleed. Upon the day of his son's arrest, he had sold everything that he possessed, even from the

little silver cross, his wife's dying legacy, to the pearl necklace which had so often flattered his paternal pride, when he saw the whiteness of the jewels lost in the pureness of his dear Nisida's neck; he had placed the proceeds of the sale of his property in his woollen cap, and set off for the capital. He ate only the morsels of bread thrown to him by pitying passers-by, and he slept upon the steps of churches, or upon the threshold of the court.

To appreciate the heroic courage of this unfortunate father at its true value, the whole extent of his misfortune must be viewed. The death of his son was not the only grief which was wringing the martyr's breast; weakened by years and misery, he knew that his son would only precede him by a few days to the tomb. His most bitter anguish was the thought of his family's shame: the first gallows which had ever been erected upon that island, of such gentle manners, such rigid virtue, and such honourable poverty, would be raised for Gabriel, and the ignominious punishment would be reflected upon the whole population, and would brand his forehead with infamy.

By a melancholy, yet too easy transition in human destiny, the poor father now longed for those moments of danger which used to make him tremble, — dangers in which his son might meet an honourable grave. And now all was lost, — a long life of labour, self-denial, and benevolence; a pure and spotless reputation, which extended even to distant countries; the traditional admiration of several generations, who had almost worshipped him; all these but served to make the abyss the deeper into which the fisherman had fallen in one day from his almost regal grandeur; his reputation, without which life is not worthy of being endured, had

disappeared; none would defend the murderer's father, all would condemn him; his very name would be pronounced with horror, and Nisida, poor orphan, would be regarded by every one but as the felon's sister.

When all delays were finished, and all poor Solomon's hopes had been successively destroyed, it was observed that a strange smile was generally upon his face, as if he was beset by some secret thought, and it became remarked about the city that the old man had lost his reason.

Gabriel rose upon his last morning, with serenity and calmness. He had slept well, and awoke filled with a strange happiness; a bright sunbeam falling through his grated window trembled upon the straw upon which he lay; and he felt an unaccountable sense of freshness and joy pervading his whole being. The gaoler, who had treated him humanely since he had been in his custody, struck by the cheerful expression of his face, hesitated for a moment before announcing the clergyman's visit, unwilling to interrupt the poor prisoner's reverie. Gabriel, however, received the intimation with joy; he conversed two hours with the good priest, and shed tears of happiness upon receiving this final absolution. The priest left the prison, melted into tears, and loudly proclaiming that never in his life had he known a soul so fair and pure, or more full of resignation and courage.

The fisherman was still absorbed in consoling thoughts when his sister entered. From the day of her brother's arrest, the poor girl, residing with an aunt, had never ceased accusing herself of all the misery which had taken place, and weeping at the feet of her holy patroness. Bending under her grief, like a lily beneath a storm, she remained for hours pale and motionless,

with her tears trickling silently between her beautiful white fingers.

When the time had come to embrace her brother for the last time, Nisida rose with the courage of a saint. She effaced all traces of her tears, braided her black hair, and clothed herself in a white robe; the unfortunate child even endeavoured to conceal her grief by an angelical deceit, — she had the strength to smile! At the sight of her fearful paleness, Gabriel felt his heart grow cold, his eyes became dim, and he ran forward to meet her, forgetting the chain which fastened him to the pillar of his prison; he stumbled and would have fallen to the ground had not Nisida rushed forward and caught him in her arms.

The young girl understood the cause of his agitation, and assured him that she was in good health. Fearful of reminding him of his terrible situation, she spoke with volubility of a thousand things, — of her aunt, the beauty of the weather, and of the Madonna. In a short time she recovered her courage, a faint colour returned to her emaciated cheeks, and Gabriel, imposed upon by her efforts to appear well and cheerful, found her still beautiful, and thanked God in his heart for having spared that feeble creature. Nisida, as though she possessed the power of reading her brother's secret thoughts, approached him, and, taking his hand with an intelligent air, she murmured in a low voice: —

"It is fortunate that our father is absent; he will be retained in the city for two days. With us it is different; we are young, and have courage!"

The poor girl was trembling like an aspen-leaf.

"What will become of you, my poor Nisida?" sighed Gabriel.

"Oh! I will pray to the Madonna. Will she not pro-

tect us?" She paused, struck by her words, to which the circumstances seemed so cruelly to give the lie. But glancing at her brother, she continued in an animated voice, "Assuredly she will protect us. She appeared to me last night in a dream. She held her infant Jesus in her arms, and gazed upon me with a mother's tenderness. She wished to make us saints, for she loves us; but to be saints, Gabriel, you know that we must suffer."

"True, my sister; go, then, and pray for me; shun those sad thoughts, which will but shake your firmness, and perhaps my own. Go; we shall see each other again on high, where our mother is expecting us, — our mother whom you have never known, and to whom I will often speak of you. Farewell, Nisida; we shall meet again in heaven!"

And he kissed her forehead tenderly.

The poor girl summoned all her strength to aid her in this dreadful moment. She walked toward the door with a firm step, and when she had reached it, she turned and waved her hand as a final adieu, preventing her agony from escaping by a nervous contraction of her whole frame; but when she was once more in the passage, a groan burst from her oppressed breast, and Gabriel, who heard it echoing through the vault, believed her heart had burst.

Then, throwing himself upon his knees, and raising his hands to heaven, he cried, —

"My sufferings are finished; I have now nothing left to live for. Thanks, God! you keep my father elsewhere; you would spare a poor old man a trial which is beyond his strength."

It was now noon, and after trying every possible means, and expending his gold to the last piece to

obtain a remission of his son's sentence, Solomon the fisherman entered his son's dungeon. He was so prostrated with agony that the prison guards were moved, and the gaoler wept as he closed the door behind him.

The old man remained motionless for some time, absorbed in contemplating his son. From the wild glance of his eye, it might have been guessed that some dark scheme was being at that moment planned in the fisherman's mind. He nevertheless appeared struck with Gabriel's beauty. Three months of confinement had restored to his skin the whiteness of which the sun had robbed it; his fine black hair fell in curls round his neck, and his sparkling eyes were fixed upon his father with a pensive expression. Never had that head appeared more beautiful than at this the moment of its fall.

"Alas! my poor boy," said the old man, "there is no hope; you must die."

"I know it," answered Gabriel, in a tone of tender reproach; "it is not that which afflicts me just now. But you, why should you have added this interview to your sorrows? I had hoped — Why did you not stay in Naples?"

"In Naples," said the old man, "they have no pity; I threw myself at the king's feet, at every one's feet, but there is no pardon, no mercy for us."

"Well, my father, and what of it? Why should I dread death? I dared it every day upon the sea. My greatest, my only torment, is the pain it gives to you."

"And I, thinkest thou, Gabriel, that my only grief is to see you die? Oh! that is but a separation of a few days; I shall soon rejoin you. But a more dreadful grief overpowers me. I myself am a strong man, but —"

He stopped, fearing that he had said too much; then, approaching his son, he continued, in a voice broken by convulsive sobs, —

"Pardon me, my Gabriel; I am the cause of your death. I should have killed the prince with my own hand. In our country, children and dotards are not condemned to death. I am upwards of eighty years of age; I should have been pardoned; they told me as much when I implored them to pardon you. Once again, forgive me, Gabriel; I thought my daughter was dead, and of nothing else; and I did not know the law."

"My father! my father!" cried Gabriel, tenderly, "why do you speak thus? I would have given my life a thousand times to add a day to yours. Since you have the strength to be present at my last hour, have no fear; you shall not see me turn pale; your son shall be worthy of yourself."

"And he must die! — die!" cried Solomon, striking his forehead with the most frantic despair.

"I am resigned, my father," said Gabriel, calmly; "did not Christ ascend to heaven by way of the cross?"

"Yes," murmured the old man, gloomily; "but he did not leave behind him a sister dishonoured by his death."

These words, which escaped from the old fisherman in spite of himself, threw a sudden and terrible light upon Gabriel's soul. For the first time it entered into his mind that his death would be infamous; he pictured the hooting populace pressing around the scaffold, the hideous hand of the executioner grasping him by the hair, and the stains of his blood falling upon his sister's white dress, and covering her with disgrace.

"Oh, that I had a weapon!" cried Gabriel, throwing his haggard eyes around him.

"The weapon is not wanting," answered Solomon, drawing forth a dagger, which had been concealed in his breast.

"Quick, then! kill me, my father!" said Gabriel, in a low voice, but with an irresistible accent of persuasion and entreaty. "Yes! I confess to you that I dread the hand of the executioner. Nisida! poor Nisida! I have seen her; she was here, even now, as fair and white as the Madonna; she smiled to conceal her torments. She was happy, poor girl, because she thought you absent. Oh, it will be sweet to die by your hand! You gave me life; take it back, my father; it is the will of God, — and Nisida will be saved. Oh! do not hesitate; that would be base in us both; it is for my sister that I die, for your child that you slay me!"

And seeing that the old man was subdued by his earnest wish, —

"Now," said he, "stab, my father!" And he offered his breast to the blow. The poor father raised his hand to strike; but a mortal convulsion shook his whole frame; he fell into his son's arms, and they both melted into tears.

"My poor father!" said Gabriel, "I should have foreseen this. Give me the poniard and turn away your head; I am young, and my arm will not tremble."

"Oh, no," replied Solomon, in a solemn tone; "no, my son; then you would be a suicide! Your soul must ascend pure and holy to heaven! God will give me strength. We have yet time!"

And a last ray of hope lighted up the fisherman's face.

There now took place in this dungeon one of those scenes which no words can describe or pen relate. The poor father seated himself upon the straw by his son's side, and laid his head upon his knees. He smiled

in the midst of his tears, like an infant, passing his hand slowly through his son's silky hair; he asked him a thousand questions, intermixed with a thousand caresses. To wean him from this world, he spoke unceasingly of the next. Then, by a sudden change, he questioned him minutely concerning all the circumstances of the past. He frequently paused in terror, and counted the beatings of his heart, as he remembered that the fearful moment was approaching.

"Tell me all, my child; have you any desire, any wish you would have gratified before you die? Do you leave any woman behind you whom you have loved in secret?"

"I have no one to regret here below but you and my sister. You are the only persons whom I have loved, since my mother's death."

"It is well! comfort yourself; your sister shall be saved."

"Oh, yes! I shall die happy."

"Do you pardon all your enemies?"

"With all my heart. I pray God to grant his pardon to the witnesses who have accused me. May he pardon me my sins!"

"How old are you, Gabriel?" inquired the old man, suddenly; for his reason as well as his memory began to fail him.

"Twenty-five years, upon All Saints' day."

"True; the day has been a sad one this year: you were in prison."

"Do you remember that it is just five years ago this day since I won the prize at the regatta at Venice?"

"Tell me about that, my boy."

And he listened with clasped hands, outstretched neck, and open mouth. But the noise of steps was

heard in the passage, and a heavy knock upon the door reminded the unfortunate pair that the fatal hour was come. The poor father had forgotten it.

The priests had sung the death psalm; the executioner was ready; the procession was about to set out, when Solomon the fisherman appeared suddenly upon the threshold of the prison, his eyes on fire, and his brow radiant with the glory of the patriarchs. The old man had recovered all his dignity, and, raising the bloody knife above his head, —

"The sacrifice is consummated," he cried in a sublime voice. "God has not sent his angel to stay the hand of Abraham!"

The crowd carried him away in triumph.[1]

[1] The details of this story are kept in the archives of the "Corte Criminale" at Naples. We have altered neither the age nor the positions of the persons who appear in the story. One of the most celebrated advocates at the Neapolitan bar secured the acquittal of the old man.

THE MARQUISE DE BRINVILLIERS.

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CHAPTER I.

It was upon a fine autumnal morning, toward the close of 1665, that a considerable crowd had assembled upon that part of the Pont Neuf which descends toward the Rue Dauphine. The object of their attention was a close carriage, the door of which a sub-officer endeavoured to open; whilst of four sergeants who were with him, two stopped the horses, as the others seized the coachman, who had replied to their orders to draw up only by driving forward at full gallop. They continued this struggle for some time, when suddenly one of the doors was violently opened, and a young officer in a cavalry uniform jumped out upon the pavement, closing the carriage immediately, though not so quickly as to hinder those who were nearest from distinguishing a woman upon the back seat, who seemed, by the extreme care taken to hide her face and figure, to have the greatest interest in concealment.

"Monsieur," said the young man, addressing himself in a haughty and imperious tone to the officer, "as I presume that, unless by mistake, your business relates to me alone, I request you will acquaint me who and what it is that has empowered you to stop the carriage in which

I was, and which, since I have left it, I demand may be allowed to continue on its progress unmolested."

"And first," replied the officer, without suffering himself to be intimidated by this tone and manner of the grand seigneur, and intimating at the same time to his men still to detain the coach, — "first, have the goodness to answer me these questions."

"I am all attention," replied the youth, evidently retaining with the greatest difficulty his *sang-froid*.

"Are not you the Chevalier Gaudin de Sainte-Croix?"

"I am; captain in the regiment of Tracy."

"The same. Then I arrest you in the king's name."

"And upon what authority?"

"By that of this *lettre de cachet*."

The chevalier glanced rapidly over the paper, and recognising immediately the signature of the minister of police, seemed now to be mindful only of the lady who had remained in the carriage, and renewed therefore his first demand.

"Be it so, monsieur," replied he to the officer; "but observe, this *lettre de cachet* bears my name alone, and, I repeat, gives you no authority to expose the person with whom I am to the gaze of public curiosity. I request, then, you will no longer permit the detention of my carriage. As for myself, conduct me where you wish; I am prepared to follow."

This seemed to the officer a reasonable request; for he desired his officers to release the carriage, which immediately proceeded at a rapid rate through the crowd, with the lady who still seemed so entirely to absorb the attention of the prisoner.

Sainte-Croix, as he had promised, offered no resistance, and for a short time followed his conductor amid the mob, whose curiosity remained unabated; then, at the

corner of the Quai de l'Horloge, a *fiacre* being drawn up, he entered it with the same haughty and disdainful air that he had hitherto maintained. The officer seated himself by his side, two of his sergeants got up behind, whilst the others, in accordance with the orders they had probably before received, withdrew, calling out to the coachman as they did so,—

"To the Bastille."

The Chevalier Gaudin de Sainte-Croix was, according to some, the natural son of a French noble, whilst others asserted that he was the child of poor parents, and that, being unable to endure the obscurity of his birth, he had preferred a titled illegitimacy, and so denied what he really was. As to his birth, thus much was positively known: he was born at Montauban; and as to his present rank in the world, he was a captain in the regiment of Tracy. At the period when this narrative commences, he was about twenty-eight or thirty years of age, and was then a handsome youth, with a countenance highly expressive and intellectual,—a boon companion and a brave officer; very susceptible of the tender passion; jealous to madness, even for a mistress, if she pleased him; prodigal as a prince, yet without a revenue; and sudden in quarrel, as those invariably are who, placed in a position to which they were not born, fancy that the slightest allusion to their origin is conceived in the desire to offend them.

Toward 1660, while serving in the army, Sainte-Croix had become acquainted with the Marquis de Brinvilliers, then a colonel in the regiment of Normandy. The equality of their age, the similarity of their professions, their qualities and defects, which were congenial, all alike tended to change a mere acquaintance into a sincere friendship: so that, upon the return of the army, the

marquis presented Sainte-Croix to his wife, and he became domesticated in the family. This intimacy was productive of the usual results.

The marchioness was then scarcely eighteen years of age. In 1651, about nine years prior to this period, she had married the marquis, who possessed an income of thirty thousand livres, to which she brought as dowry two hundred thousand in addition, besides what might accrue from any hereditary possessions.[1] At eighteen the marchioness was in all the splendour of her beauty; her figure was small, but exquisitely modelled; her well-formed, rounded face was charmingly delicate, and her features the more regular as, never affected by any internal emotion, they seemed like those of a statue which, by some magic power, has been momentarily endowed with life; so that every one might mistake for the serenity of a pure mind that cold and cruel impassibility which was only the sign of remorse.

Sainte-Croix and the marchioness, from the first, became mutually attached; as for the marquis, whether he was blessed with that spirit of conjugal philosophy without which there then was no good taste, or, absorbed in his own pursuits, he did not see, or was indifferent to the fact, he betrayed no jealousy of this intimacy, and continued that reckless course of extravagance by which he was already so much involved, until his embarrassments were so great that the marchioness, who no longer loved him, and who abandoned herself entirely to her new passion, demanded and obtained a separation. She thereupon abandoned her husband's house, and, observing no further restraint, lived openly in the society of Sainte-Croix.

[1] She was named Marie Madeleine, had two brothers and a sister, and her father, M. Dreux d'Aubray, was "lieutenant civil" of the Châtelet at Paris.

This conduct, authorised, however, by the daily examples of the aristocracy, in no degree affected the marquis; he continued his ruinous career without the slightest concern about his wife's proceedings. But it was very different with M. Dreux d'Aubray, who retained the scruples of his order. Shocked at the conduct of his daughter, which might reflect disgrace upon his reputation, he obtained a *lettre de cachet*, authorising the arrest of Sainte-Croix, wherever he might be found.

We have seen the manner in which this arrest had been effected, at the moment when he was seated in the carriage with the marchioness, whom the reader has, no doubt, recognised as the lady so anxious to avoid the curiosity of the crowd. It will be readily conceived how much self-restraint was requisite to master a temperament like that of Sainte-Croix's, upon being thus arrested in the open street; and although not one word escaped him whilst proceeding to the Bastille, it was hardly possible to conceal the storm of feeling that was gathering in his mind. He maintained, however, the calmness he had hitherto evinced, not only when he saw the fatal doors open and close upon him, which, like those of Dante's hell, desire the victim they swallow up to leave all hope behind him at their threshold, but even during his replies to the customary questions of the governor. His voice did not falter, nor did his hand shake, as he signed the register of his entry in the prison. This done, a gaoler, after conducting him through a series of cold and humid corridors, where light might penetrate, but fresh air never, opened the door of a cell, into which he had barely entered when the door closed upon him.

Whilst the bolts harshly grated upon his ear, Sainte-Croix turned around to where the rays of the moon

streamed through the bars of a window at the height of about eight or ten feet; they fell upon a miserable bed, leaving the rest of the apartment in the deepest darkness. He stood for a moment anxiously listening to the echo of the retiring footsteps; then, feeling he was alone and as if longer restraint would have been death, he flung himself upon his bed, with a cry like that of a wild beast, cursing men who tore him from the pleasures of his joyous life, and the Deity by whom it was permitted, and invoking every power, whatever might be its attributes, to restore him to liberty and revenge.

In a moment, as if his words had summoned it from the depths of earth, a form, tall, pale, and attenuated, with long dark hair, and clothed in a black doublet, slowly entered the circle of the sickly, bluish light, which fell around the window, and approached the bed on which Sainte-Croix was lying. Naturally brave as he was, yet, so sudden was the apparition, so consequent upon his words, that at a period of belief in the mysteries of magic, Sainte-Croix did not doubt for a moment that the Evil One, who incessantly haunts the paths of men, had heard his prayer, and had appeared at his supplication. He raised himself upon his bed, feeling with his hand mechanically for his sword, whilst as the mysterious being approached him, his hair stood on end, and a cold sweat hung in heavy drops upon his brow. At last the apparition stopped, his eyes fixed upon the prisoner's, who returned his gaze; then, in a deep tone of voice, he thus addressed him: —

"Thou hast asked, young man, for the means to revenge thyself against man who proscribes, and to contend against God who abandons thee; those means I possess, and offer. Darest thou accept them?"

"But first," demanded Sainte-Croix, "who are you?"

"Why seekest thou to know who I may be,—since I am here at the moment thou invokest me, and bring thee what thou hast demanded?"

"It matters not," replied Sainte-Croix,—still under the impression that he was dealing with a supernatural agent,—"when one agrees to such a compact, it is indifferent with whom one acts."

"Well, then, since thou wishest to know me," replied the stranger, "I am the Italian, Exili."

Sainte-Croix shuddered; he awoke from an infernal dream to a terrible reality; for the name he had heard was fearfully celebrated, not only throughout France, but Italy.

Expatriated upon the suspicion of numerous murders by poison, of which it had been impossible to procure proof, Exili had come from Rome to Paris, where, as in his native country, he soon attracted the attention of the police; but here, as before, they had been foiled in their attempts to convict the disciple of Renato and La Tofana. But though legal proof was deficient, there was enough moral evidence to authorise his detention. A *lettre de cachet* was issued; Exili was consigned to the Bastille, and here he had been confined for six months prior to the arrival of Sainte-Croix. Owing to the increase of the prisoners, the governor had introduced his new guest to the society of an earlier acquaintance, and associated Exili with Sainte-Croix, unaware that he was thus yoking together two demons.

Sainte-Croix, then, as we have seen, entered the chamber, and, owing to its darkness, had not observed his messmate; but his imprecations revealing his hatred to Exili, the latter seized the opportunity of securing a powerful and devoted adherent, who, free, might enable him to regain his own freedom, or at least avenge him, if the Bastille were destined to be his tomb.

Sainte-Croix's repugnance to his companion soon passed away, and the skilful master acquired a deserving scholar. For the character of the latter, by its good and evil qualities, its strange union of virtuous and vicious principles, had now reached that period of life when it is determined by the mastery of one or other of these incentives. Had an angel met him in his path, he had probably conducted him to heaven; it was a demon he encountered, and he followed downward to destruction.

Exili was no common practitioner; he was an adept in poisoning,—a rival of the Medici, and the Borgias. To him murder had become an art; he had reduced it to fixed rules, and such was the elevation he had attained that he pursued it less from interest than from an irresistible love of experiment. Creation is an attribute of the Deity; destruction, the power he has committed unto man, who seeks, therefore, to equal the Deity by destroying. Such was the pride of Exili,—the pale and gloomy alchemist of the unseen void, who, abandoning to others the research into the mysteries of life, had discovered those of death.

Sainte-Croix for some time hesitated, but yielded at last to the raillery of his companion, who depicted the French as in general the victims of their own revenge, falling with their enemy, whilst they might survive, and triumph over his grave; he opposed to the bold and reckless act, which draws down upon the murderer a death more cruel than he himself inflicts, the craft of the Florentine, which smiles as it presents the deadly poison. He enumerated all those powders and liquids of some of which it is the property to consume by slow degrees, and of others so rapid are the effects that they strike down like the lightning, without time being given to their victims for the utterance of a cry. By degrees

Sainte-Croix came to feel an interest in this terrible game, which places the lives of all in the power of one. He profited at first by the experiments of Exili, then conducted them himself, and at the expiration of a year, when he quitted the Bastille, the scholar was nearly the rival of his master. He re-entered society, which had banished him, endowed with a fatal secret, by which he could inflict the misery he had endured.

Soon after, Exili was similarly released, and sought immediately Sainte-Croix, who hired an apartment for him in the name of his intendant, Martin de Breuilli, in a narrow street near the Place Maubert, belonging to a woman named Brunet. Whether the Marquise de Brinvilliers had visited him during his detention is unknown, but it is certain that upon his freedom they were more intimate than before; but past experience had taught them what to fear. They resolved, therefore, to make an immediate trial of the science acquired by Sainte-Croix, and M. d'Aubray was selected by his daughter as the first victim. She by this means would free herself from a rigid censor and the opponent of her pleasures, and would repair by her inheritance of his property the fortune almost squandered by her husband. But a blow thus struck must be a decisive one; she wished, therefore, first to test the poison upon another. Whereupon, one morning, when her maid Françoise Roussel entered her room after breakfast, she gave her a slice of ham and some preserved gooseberries, that she might partake of them as her own.

The poor girl ate without suspicion of what she had thus received; but no sooner had she done so than she was indisposed, feeling a great pain in her stomach, and as if her heart were pricked with pins; but she recovered, and the marchioness in consequence received from Sainte-

Croix, after a few days, another and more efficacious poison.

The time for its trial arrived. M. d'Aubray went to pass the vacation at his villa of Offemont, whither his daughter offered to accompany him; and he, believing her connexion with Sainte-Croix to be now entirely broken off, accepted her proposal with pleasure. Offemont was a place well adapted for the crime, situated as it was in the forest of Aigne, about four leagues from Compiègne; poison there might do its work before succour could arrive.

M. d'Aubray set out with his daughter and a single servant. Never had the marchioness before paid so sedulous attention to her father as she now did, and her repentance seemed to have increased his affection. It was then too the marchioness availed herself of that fearful power over her emotions, of which her features never indicated a trace; ever by her father's side, sleeping in the room adjoining, taking her meals with him, incessant in the most affectionate attentions and the kindliest offices, allowing none to wait upon him but herself, and amidst these cares, with her infamous project still resting upon her mind, maintaining a countenance so open and smiling that not the most suspicious eye could have marked any expression but that of tenderness and devotion. It was thus she presented to her father a poisoned soup. He received it from her hands; she watched him as he partook of it, and upon her face of bronze no sign appeared of the awful anxiety that must have compressed her heart. Then, when it was finished, she received without the slightest emotion the cup from his hand, and retired to her chamber, listening and awaiting the result. The effect was prompt. She heard her father utter some complaints and groan heavily, then,

unable to endure the pain, call loudly upon his daughter. The marchioness entered.

But now her features betrayed the deepest anxiety, which M. d'Aubray sought to alleviate, considering it to be merely a slight indisposition, for which he was unwilling to procure medical skill. At last, however, his symptoms became so violent, the pain so unendurable, that he yielded to his daughter's entreaties, and gave orders to send for a physician. The physician came at eight the following morning, but being qualified to judge of the disease only by the statement of M. d'Aubray, he considered it to be a fit of indigestion, prescribed accordingly, and returned to Compiègne.

The marchioness now never quitted the invalid. Her bed was removed into his room; she declared that she alone would tend him: and thus she could watch the progress and the final struggle between life and death now exhibited in the sufferings of her father.

The physician came the next morning. M. d'Aubray was worse; his vomitings had ceased, but the pains in the stomach had become more acute, and a strange heat consumed his bowels. He was advised a method of treatment which rendered necessary his return to Paris. He was, however, so weak that he was doubtful whether it would not be better to stop at Compiègne; but the marchioness urged so earnestly the necessity of obtaining better assistance and advice than he could elsewhere receive that M. d'Aubray decided upon returning home. He journeyed, reclining in his carriage, his head resting upon his daughter's bosom; for not one moment did a look or word betray the falsehood of her affectionate devotion.

At last they reached Paris. Everything had proceeded favourably to the marchioness: the scene was

changed; the physician who had seen the first symptoms would not witness the agonies of death, and in tracing the progress no one could now discover the cause of the illness; the thread of inquiry was snapped, and its lines were too far asunder to permit their being reunited.

Notwithstanding every attention, M. d'Aubray gradually grew worse; the marchioness never quitted him. After an agony of four days he expired in her arms, bestowing with his last breath a blessing upon his murderess. Her grief upon this was so violent and unrestrained that in comparison her brother's sorrow appeared indifference. But as no one suspected the crime, no examination of the body took place, and the tomb closed without the slightest supposition of guilt on her part.

But her object was not fully accomplished; she had acquired greater freedom of action, but her father's will did not realise her expectations; the greater part of his property reverted to her eldest brother, and to the second, who was a parliamentary councillor; thus her own fortune was but slightly increased.

Sainte-Croix still pursued his gay and extravagant course of life with no apparent means; he had a steward named Martin, three footmen, George, Lapierre, and Lachaussée, and besides his carriage and equipages, other conveyances for his nightly excursions; and as he was young and handsome, no one was particularly concerned to inquire whence his wealth proceeded. It was then customary enough for handsome men to be well provided for; it was said of Sainte-Croix that he had discovered the philosopher's stone. In society he had made acquaintance and was on terms of friendship with many of the nobility and men of fortune, amongst the latter with Reich de Penautier, a millionnaire, the receiver-general

of the clergy, and treasurer of the estates of Languedoc, — one of those men with whom all things succeed, and who seem by the power of money to give laws to creation. Penautier was connected in business with his head clerk, D'Alibert, who died suddenly of apoplexy. This event was known to him before the man's family were acquainted with it: all papers relative to their partnership disappeared, and the wife and daughter of the deceased were ruined. His brother-in-law, the Sieur de la Magdelaine, upon some vague rumours as to his death, commenced an inquiry, but died suddenly whilst it was proceeding.

In one instance fortune seemed to abandon her favourite. Penautier was anxious to succeed the Sieur de Mennevillette in the office of receiver-general of the clergy, of about the value of sixty thousand livres, and, knowing that he wished to resign in favour of Pierre Hannyvel, Sieur de Saint-Laurent, he had endeavoured to purchase its possession, to the prejudice of the latter, but in vain; at the express desire of the clergy, Saint-Laurent received the appointment. Penautier had thereupon offered him forty thousand crowns for the half share of this appointment, but Saint-Laurent had declined the proposal. Their acquaintance, however, was continued, and Penautier was considered so predestined to success that none doubted he would finally obtain the office he desired.

In the mean time, the period of mourning having elapsed, Sainte-Croix and the marchioness openly resumed their intercourse; her brothers thereupon remonstrated, through the medium of a younger sister, then in a Carmelite convent; and the marchioness learnt that her father, on his deathbed, had intrusted to them the duty of her moral guidance. Thus her first crime was almost

fruitless; she wished to free herself from the remonstrances of her father, and to share his fortune; yet her inheritance was so trifling it had scarcely sufficed to pay her debts, and the former censures were renewed by her brothers, the elder of whom, as president of the civil tribunal, could separate her again from her lover. This inconvenience was to be remedied. Lachaussée quitted the service of Sainte-Croix, and, through the influence of the marchioness, was engaged in the service of her brothers. But this time, to avoid suspicion, it was requisite to employ a poison less rapid in its action than that which had killed M. d'Aubray. They recommenced their experiments, not upon animals, lest the difference of organisation might defeat their views, but, as before, *in animâ vili.*

The marchioness was known as a pious and charitable woman, ever ready to relieve the distressed, and sharing with the Sisters of Mercy the attendance upon the sick, to whom she sent wine and medicine at the hospitals. Thus it caused no surprise to see her at the Hôtel Dieu, distributing biscuits and preserved fruits to the convalescent; and her kindness, as before, was gratefully acknowledged. One month subsequent to this she revisited the hospital, to inquire after some patients in whose welfare she was much interested; she was told they had suffered a relapse, that fresh symptoms had supervened, that a deadly languor overcame them, beneath whose wasting influence they gradually declined. Of its cause she could learn nothing. The physicians told her the disease was unknown, and defied their utmost skill. She inquired at the expiration of a fortnight some of the patients were dead; others still lingered in hopeless agony, animated skeletons, whose only signs of life were the voice, sight, and breath.

Within two months all were dead: medical skill was equally foiled upon their examination after death, as it had been in their treatment. Such success was encouraging. Lachaussée received orders to accomplish his mission. One morning he was desired by his master to bring a glass of water and some wine, for himself and his secretary, Constè. He did so: but no sooner had D'Aubray touched it with his lips than he pushed it away, saying, "What is it you have brought? I think you wish to poison me;" then, placing the glass before Constè, he bade him examine it and see what it contained. The secretary poured a few drops of the liquid into a teaspoon; it had the taste and smell of vitriol.

Lachaussée now came forward, and said he knew what it was; that the servant of the councillor having that morning taken medicine, he had accidentally brought the glass he had used. And upon this, taking the glass from the secretary's hand, he pretended to taste it, and added he was right in his supposition, — it was the same by its smell; and thereupon he threw what remained of it into the fireplace. As neither of them had taken enough of the liquid to be inconvenienced, the circumstance was soon forgotten; but to the marchioness and Sainte Croix it was a failure, and, at the risk of including many in their act of revenge, they resolved to employ other means.

Three months elapsed without the occurrence of any favourable opportunity; but about the beginning of April, 1670, D'Aubray and his brother went to spend the Easter holidays at Villequoy, in Beauce. Lachaussée accompanied them, and received fresh instructions on their departure. The day after their arrival a pigeon-pie was placed on the table at dinner. Seven persons who partook of it were soon after taken ill; three, who had not, were unaffected. Those upon whom the poison had

chiefly acted were M. d'Aubray, his brother, and the captain of the guard. Whatever might be the cause, the two former were the most quickly indisposed with violent vomitings; the latter, with others, although suffering greatly from pain in the stomach, did not at first exhibit symptoms so dangerous; and here, as before, all medical aid was powerless. The 12th of April, five days subsequent to this, the president of the civil court and his brother, the councillor, returned to Paris, both so changed that they seemed the victims of a long and painful illness.

The marchioness was then residing in the country, where she remained during the illness of her brothers. At the very first consultation all hope of saving the president was abandoned by his physicians. His case was similar to that of his father, and was considered to be an unknown and incurable disease. He became daily worse, refused all kinds of food, and was subject to incessant vomitings. For the last three days of his life, he complained as if a fire were constantly burning in his chest, the flames of which seemed to be almost indicated by the aspect of his eyes, as these continued animated when death was master over the rest. At last, June 17, 1670, he expired. Suspicions were now excited; his body was opened, and a *procès-verbal* was drawn up. This was done in the presence of MM. Dupré and Durant, surgeons, Yavart, apothecary, and M. Bachot, the medical attendant of the brothers. They admitted that the state of the stomach and of the duodenum might result from poison; but as certain humours would at times induce the same phenomena, they would not affirm that the death of the patient occurred from other than natural causes; he was therefore interred without further inquiry.

It was M. Bachot who had particularly recommended, as medical attendant upon the councillor, this autopsy of his brother. He seemed stricken by the same malady, and he sought to discover, from the traces of death, some means yet to defend life. The symptoms were similar, and, moreover, the councillor was subject to violent paroxysms of mind and body, which allowed him no repose; his bed was torture, yet no sooner had he quitted than he sought it again, if but merely as a variation of suffering. At the end of three months he died. The stomach, duodenum, and liver were similarly disorganised, and presented the same indications of poison as his brother's, and moreover were externally burnt, which was, said the physicians, an unequivocal sign of poison; although it sometimes happens, added they, that a cacochymy is followed by the same effects; but no certain evidence could be obtained. As for Lachaussée, so free was he from suspicion that he received a legacy of one hundred crowns from the councillor, and a present of one thousand, also, from the marchioness and Sainte-Croix, in acknowledgment of his attentions.

Nevertheless, events of this kind, so frequent and fatal in one family, not only afflicted the heart, but were fearful to the mind. For death is not malicious, it is rather deaf and blind, — it strikes at random; and society was astonished to view this apparent rancour against all who bore one name. Yet no suspicion was excited. The marchioness went into mourning; Sainte-Croix continued his course of extravagance, and all things proceeded as usual. He had also, in the mean time, become acquainted with Saint-Laurent, whose office Penautier had failed to obtain, — who, although he had inherited the immense wealth of his father-in-law, the Sieur Lescecq, who had suddenly died, never-

theless still hankered after the place of receiver-general of the clergy of Languedoc. Fortune favoured him in this respect at last. A few days after he had taken into his service, at the recommendation of Sainte-Croix, a domestic named George, Saint-Laurent was taken ill, — the symptoms, in every respect as serious as those of M. d'Aubray and his sons, only more rapid, terminating fatally in twenty-four hours. Upon the day of his death an officer of the supreme court arrived, and, on the recital of his friend's illness, said to the notary, Sainfray, in the presence of the servants, that it would be requisite to open the body. One hour after, George disappeared, without a word to any one, and without seeking his wages. Suspicions increased; but, as before, the examination of the body was productive of no definite result; the general appearance was the same as in the cases of the Messrs. d'Aubray, only that the intestines were marked with numerous red spots. In June, 1669, Penautier succeeded Saint-Laurent.

The widow of Saint-Laurent entertained suspicions which amounted almost to certainty upon the flight of his servant, and to which the following circumstance added strength. An abbé, a particular friend of the deceased, aware of the sudden disappearance of George, met him some days after in the street des Maçons, near the Sorbonne. They were both on the same side, and a hay cart which was passing at the time stopped up the way. George raised his head, immediately recognised the abbé, crouched beneath the waggon, and, at the risk of being crushed as it proceeded, passed beneath it, and thus escaped from the sight of a man whose presence recalled at once his crime, and made him tremble for its retribution.

At the instance of Madame de Saint-Laurent, an

active inquiry was commenced, but in vain; notwithstanding every exertion, he escaped. In the mean time, rumours of these strange, sudden, and unexplained deaths were widely circulated in Paris; in the gay salons of which, their frequent discussion became a source of inquietude to Sainte-Croix. No suspicion at present rested upon him, but precaution was requisite; he thought, therefore, to obtain a situation which should place him beyond its reach. A vacancy was about to occur in the king's household, of which the purchase-money was one hundred thousand crowns; and although without any apparent resources, it was nevertheless stated he was about to give this sum. He addressed himself to Belleguise to arrange this with Penautier, who was unwilling to enter into terms; he had no further occasion for the services of Sainte-Croix; he had inherited all he could expect, and endeavoured therefore to induce him to renounce his project.

Sainte-Croix, upon this, wrote to Belleguise, urging his reconsideration, dwelling upon the advantages that would accrue to all, and appointing an interview at the same time, with a promise of further explanations. He then lived in the street des Bernardins, but the place of meeting he named was the room he had hired of the Widow Brunet, in the by-street of the Place Maubert. It was here and at the house of the apothecary Glazer that his experiments were conducted; but by a just retribution these manipulations were fatal to those who prepared them. The apothecary died; Martin after enduring violent pain, was at his last gasp; Sainte-Croix himself was so ill, although ignorant of the cause, that, unable to quit his house, he had the furnace of Glazer brought to him, that he might continue his experiments. He was then, in fact, engaged in researches

Death of Sainte-Croix.

Photo-Etching. — From Painting by Edmund Garrett.

about to purchase a place at court had tended still more to make him known. Lachaussée was among the first who heard of his death. Knowing that his rooms were in possession of the authorities, he endeavoured to obtain possession of some money and papers, which he declared to be his property, and reclaimed therefore by a requisition to that effect. He received for answer that he must await the removal of the seals; and if facts justified his statements, whatever belonged to him should be given up.

Nor was Lachaussée the only one who was seriously alarmed by the death of Sainte-Croix. The marchioness, to whom all the secrets of the fatal cabinet were familiar, had no sooner heard of the event than she proceeded to the commissioner; and although it was late at night, she requested an immediate interview. But his head-clerk assuring her it was impossible, as his master had retired to rest, the marchioness persisted, requesting that he might be awakened, and that he would give up to her a casket, which she wished to receive unopened. But finding her entreaties were useless, she retired, saying that she would send in the morning to receive it. Early, therefore, the next day, a man visited the commissioner, offering from her the sum of fifty louis, if he would deliver up the casket; but he replied that it was impossible until the usual formalities had taken place, and that then whatever was really her property should at once be faithfully restored. This answer decided her course; no time was to be lost; she set out immediately from her house in the street Neuve Saint-Paul to her country house at Picpus; and thence to Liège, where she took refuge in a convent.

Sainte-Croix's rooms had been sequestered on July 31, 1672, and upon the 8th of August the investigation

began. Alexandre Delamarre, an attorney, on behalf of the marchioness, put in a paper, declaring that if in the casket her signature was found affixed to a promissory note of thirty thousand livres, it was her intention to declare it void, as obtained in an illegal manner. After this formality, the door was opened in the presence of the Commissioner Picard, the officer appointed, and the widow of Sainte-Croix. They began by arranging the loose papers. Whilst they were thus occupied, a small roll fell from amongst the papers, on which was written, "My Confession;" but as all those present had no reason to believe Sainte-Croix to have been a dishonest man, they decided it should be destroyed unread. This done, they proceeded to draw up an inventory of the property. One of the first objects which arrested their attention was the casket claimed by the marchioness. Her eagerness to obtain it had excited curiosity; they resolved to commence with its examination, and every one pressed around to know what it contained. This, however, it is best to relate by the reproduction of the *procès-verbal;* no language, in such a case, is so powerfully descriptive as the official document.

"In the cabinet of Sainte-Croix we found a small casket, about a foot square, upon opening which there was a half-sheet of paper, indorsed, 'My Will;' written on one side as follows: —

"'I earnestly solicit those into whose hands this casket may fall to deliver it themselves into the hands of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, dwelling Rue Neuve Saint-Paul, inasmuch as whatever it contains belongs to her alone, and there is nothing within it of any utility to another; and in case her death should have preceded mine, that it may be then burnt, with its contents untouched. And to the end that no plea of ignorance may be advanced, I swear by the God whom I adore,

and by all that is sacred, that nothing but the truth is here averred. If peradventure these my intentions, in every respect so just and reasonable, are opposed, I charge their consciences both in this and the world to come with the acquittal of any responsibility dependent upon mine, declaring this to be my last will. Done at Paris, this 26th of May, 1672.

"'SAINTE-CROIX.'

And underneath, these words: 'There is a packet, directed to M. Penautier, which should be delivered up.'"

Such an opening increased the interest of the scene: there was a general murmur of curiosity; but on silence being restored, the inventory was continued.

"A packet was found enclosed, of eight seals of different arms, indorsed, 'To be destroyed in case of my death, being of no use to any one. I humbly supplicate those into whose hands these may fall to burn them, and all unopened. I lay it as a duty on their consciences.' In this packet were found two more, containing sublimate of mercury.

"Item: a packet with six seals, and a similar inscription, in which was another sublimate, weighing about half a pound.

"Item: another with three packets, one containing half an ounce of sublimate; the other, two ounces, and a quarter of a pound of Roman vitriol; and the third, vitriol, calcined and prepared. In the casket there was also a square phial, containing about half a pint of clear water, the nature of which M. Moreau, the physician, declared he could not describe until it had been subjected to chemical analysis.

"Item: another phial, at the bottom of which there was a white sediment. A delf pot, in which there were three drachms of prepared opium.

"Item: a folded paper, in which there were two or three drachms of corrosive sublimate in powder. Then a small box, in which was a kind of stone called the 'infernal stone;' a paper, containing an ounce of opium; then three ounces of regulus of antimony, some flower of quince, and a dried preparation of the same.

"Item: a packet, indorsed, 'To be burnt in case of my death,' containing thirty-four letters, said to be in the handwriting of the Marquise de Brinvilliers.

"Item: a packet sealed with six seals, with the same inscription as above, in which were found twenty-seven pieces of paper, each indorsed, 'Many curious secrets.'

"Lastly: a packet containing seventy-five livres, variously addressed."

The examiners found also in the casket two bonds,—one from the Marquise de Brinvilliers, the other from Penautier; the first for thirty thousand francs, the second for ten thousand francs; the one corresponding with the death of D'Aubray the father, the other with that of Saint-Laurent. This difference showed that, according to the tariff of Sainte-Croix, parricide was dearer than a common assassination. Thus, at the moment of his death also, he had bequeathed his poisons to his mistress and his friend. He had not revelled sufficiently in crimes, but desired to be an accomplice in murder, even after death. The first care of the officers was to analyse the contents of the packets, and to test them upon different animals, and the following is the report of Guy Simon.

After describing its careful preparation, subtle qualities, and fatal properties, he adds:—

"In water the weight of the poison commonly throws it down, or the former rises and the poison is precipitated. Fire consumes and dissipates what is harmless and pure, and leaves only an acrid, pungent matter, which resists its influence. The effect that the poison produces on animals is still more sensible; its malignity is uniform wheresoever it spreads, vitiating all it touches, and consuming the intestines by a violent and strange inflammation. But in animals its appearance is so carefully concealed that it cannot be detected; every

part is apparently endowed with life whilst death circulates in the veins; and it leaves no trace behind of its existence. Every kind of test has been applied: the first by pouring some drops of the liquid found in one of the phials, in oil of tartar and sea water, — and nothing was precipitated at the bottom of the vessels into which it was poured; the second, by pouring the same liquid into a sanded vessel, — and no matter dry or acrid to the tongue, nor any fixed salt, was found; the third was upon a turkey hen, a pigeon, dog, and other animals, and upon dissection a small quantity of coagulated blood upon the ventricle of the heart was all that could be traced of its action. Two other experiments made upon a cat and a pigeon by a white powder gave similar results; death was in both cases gradual, but left scarcely any trace of its cause."

These results, whilst proving the extent of Sainte-Croix's chemical knowledge, excited the suspicion that he had not gratuitously employed his art; the late deaths, so sudden and unexpected, occurred to the minds of all; the bonds of the marchioness and Penautier seemed the covenants of blood; and as one was absent, and the other too rich and powerful to be arrested without proof, the opposition raised by Lachaussée was remembered. He had stated in the document he put in, upon the sealing of the effects of the deceased, that for seven years he had been in Sainte-Croix's service, including thus the period of his attendance upon the brothers D'Aubray. The bag containing the thousand pistoles, and three bonds of one hundred livres, had been found in the spot he had named; it was thereby evident he was well acquainted with the cabinet; were this so, he knew of the existence of the casket; if he knew of that, he could not be innocent.

The widow of the eldest son of M. d'Aubray therefore preferred an accusation against Lachaussée, upon which he was arrested, and poison was found upon him. The

cause was brought before the Châtelet; Lachaussée firmly denied the charge; and the judges, not thinking there was yet a sufficiency of proof, condemned him to undergo the *question préparatoire*;[1] and, by virtue of an appeal of Madame Mangot de Villarceaux, a decree was pronounced, dated March 4, 1673, which declared Jean Amelin, called Lachaussée, attainted and convicted of having poisoned the late president and the councillor of the Civil Court, to be condemned to be broken alive, and to expire upon the wheel, but previously to be subjected to the question ordinary and extraordinary, to obtain a full revelation of his accomplices. By the same decree, the Marquise de Brinvilliers was condemned, by default, to have her head cut off.

Lachaussée underwent the torture of the "boots," which consisted in placing each limb of the condemned between two wooden boards, and then compressing these together by a ring of iron, after which wedges were driven down the centre of the wooden frames. The ordinary torture was four, the extraordinary, eight wedges. At the third wedge, Lachaussée declared he was ready to confess; the torture was thereupon remitted. He was then placed upon a mattress, and, being unable to speak, he requested half an hour to recover his strength. The following is an extract from the *procès-verbal*: —

[1] There were two kinds of torture: the *question préparatoire* and the *question préalable*. The preparatory question, or examination by torture, was employed when the judges, not being convinced, desired to obtain direct proof from the avowals of the culprit, prior to passing judgment. The *question préalable*, on the contrary, was applied after judgment had been given, with a view to discover his accomplices. In the former case, a prisoner, in the hope of saving his life, would frequently endure the most frightful tortures; but in the latter, knowing he was condemned, he rarely added these to a death already sufficiently terrible.

"Upon his recovery, Lachaussée admitted his guilt, — that Sainte-Croix had told him that the marchioness had given to him the poison with which to kill her brothers; that he had poisoned them in water and broths; had mixed a reddish water in the wine of the eldest son of D'Aubray, and clear water in the pigeon-pie at Villequoy; that for this Sainte-Croix had promised him a hundred pistoles, and to retain him always in his service; that he gave him an account of the effect of these poisons, and had received them very frequently from him. Sainte-Croix moreover told him that the marchioness was not informed of his other poisonings, but he thought she was aware of them, because she frequently spoke to him upon the matter; that she wished to induce him to abscond, offered money for that purpose, and had required of him the casket, with whatever it contained; and, finally, had Sainte-Croix been able to introduce any one into the service of the widow of the president of the civil court, he would also have poisoned her, — also, that Sainte-Croix had designs upon her sister-in-law."

This confession, removing all further doubt, occasioned a decree, dated 24th of March, 1673, by virtue of which, Belleguise, Martin, Poitevin, Olivier Véron, and the wife of a man named Quésdon, were cited to appear before the court; as well, also, as the arrest of Lapierre, and a subpœna to be served upon Penautier.

In consequence, on the 21st, 22nd, and 24th, Penautier, Martin, and Belleguise were examined. On the 26th, the first was released, Belleguise was remanded, and the arrest of Martin ordered. On the 24th of March, Lachaussée was broken upon the wheel. Exili, the principal of all this evil, disappeared like Mephistopheles after the destruction of Faust, and no one heard more of him. At the end of the year, Martin was released, owing to deficiency of proof.

CHAPTER II.

During these proceedings the marchioness had remained at Liège, and although retired into a convent, had by no means renounced certain earthly indulgences; she was reconciled to the death of Sainte-Croix, though she had loved him so much as to threaten suicide on his account, and had moreover appointed as his successor a person named Theria, of whom, beyond his name, no information can be obtained. But as every successive witness had more or less implicated her, it was resolved to pursue her into the retreat where she believed she was in safety. But this was a commission of great difficulty, and requiring much discretion. Desgrais, one of the most active officers of the *maréchaussée*, offered to undertake it. He was a handsome youth about thirty-six or thirty-eight years of age, whose appearance in no degree betrayed the officer of police; he assumed all characters with equal ease, associating with every grade of society, under his disguise, from the lowest beggar to the highest seigneur. His offer was accepted. He departed, therefore, for Liège, escorted by a body of archers, and furnished with a letter from the king, addressed to the municipal Council of Sixty, in which Louis XIV. reclaimed the marchioness.

The council, upon the perusal of this, ordered her to be delivered up to Desgrais. This was much, but not sufficient for his purpose; he dared not arrest the marchioness in the convent, for two reasons, — first,

because, if made aware of his intentions, she might conceal herself in some of those cloistered retreats known only to her superiors; and secondly, because an event of this kind in so religious a city as Liège would be considered a profanation, and lead to some popular excitement, by the aid of which she might be able to escape.

Desgrais now considered what disguise he should assume, and thinking that of an abbé the least likely to awaken suspicion, he presented himself at the convent gates as a compatriot returning from Rome, who was unwilling to pass through Liège without paying his respects to a lady so eminent by her beauty and her misfortunes as the marchioness. Desgrais had all the manners of the scion of a noble house; and, flattering as a courtier, venturous as a soldier, charming alike by his vivacity and his self-confidence, his first visit soon obtained him the promised pleasure of another. This was not long delayed; he returned early the next day (such attention could not but be pleasing to the marchioness), and was more cordially received than before. Intellectual, and accustomed to good society, of which lately she had been deprived, she found in Desgrais the refined manners of her Parisian circles.

Unfortunately, the charming abbé was obliged to leave Liège within a few days; he was consequently more urgent for another interview, and this was arranged for the next day, with all the usual forms of a rendezvous. He was punctual, and had been impatiently expected, but by a conjunction of circumstances, which Desgrais had doubtless prearranged, their agreeable conference was continually interrupted, and this precisely at the moment when witnesses were most inconvenient; he complained of this as a danger that might compromise

them both, and he besought the marchioness to grant him a meeting beyond the city, in a spot where they should be neither recognised nor followed. His request was denied only so long as was necessary to enhance the value of the favour, and was finally accorded for the same evening.

The marchioness met Desgrais at the appointed place: then, on taking her by the hand, he made a signal, — the archers advanced, the lover removed his mask, and the inamorata was a prisoner. Desgrais upon this returned immediately to the convent, produced his order from the Council of Sixty, by which he obtained access to the room of the marchioness, and beneath her bed he found a casket, which he immediately sealed up and brought away. The marchioness, upon seeing this casket in his hands, at first appeared completely overcome, but recovering herself she claimed from him a paper it contained, entitled her confession; Desgrais refused it, and as he turned to give orders to set forward on the journey to Paris, she tried to choke herself by swallowing a pin, but this being observed was prevented by Claude Rolla, one of the archers. They halted in the evening for supper, at which another archer, named Barbier, attended, and carefully removed the knives, forks, and everything with which self-destruction could be attempted; whereupon the marchioness bit a piece from the glass out of which she was drinking, but this she was prevented from swallowing. She then said that if Barbier would save her she would amply reward him, and proposed for that purpose the assassination of Desgrais; but this he declined, adding that for any other purpose he was at her disposal. Thereupon she asked for pen and paper, and wrote the following letter: —

"My dear Theria, — I am in the custody of Desgrais, who is forcibly conveying me from Liège to Paris. Come and release me."

Babier took the letter and promised to deliver it as addressed, but instead of this placed it in the hands of Desgrais. On the morrow she sent another to Theria, acquainting him that as the escort consisted of only eight persons, four or five determined men might readily defeat them, and that she reckoned upon his making the attempt. At last, anxious from not receiving any answer, or observing any indication of an endeavour to fulfil her requests, she despatched a third; in this she besought Theria, if he were not able to attack the escort and free her, at least to slay two of the four horses which belonged to it, and to profit by the confusion this would cause, to gain possession of the casket and destroy it, as without this she was inevitably lost.

Although Theria had never received these letters, he nevertheless proceeded to Maestricht, through which the prisoner was to pass, and attempted to bribe the archers, offering no less than ten thousand livres, but they refused it. At Rocroy, the escort was met by M. le Conseiller Palluau, whom the parliament had empowered to meet the prisoner on her way, and to submit her to an unexpected examination, so that being thus taken by surprise, she should not have time for preparation. Desgrais first made him acquainted with every previous fact, and then placed in his hands the casket which had been a point of such extreme solicitude to her; M. de Palluau opened it, and found, amongst others, a paper entitled, "My Confession."[1]

[1] I have made every possible research to obtain this document, the object of general conversation at the period it refers to; but it was never printed, either in the "Gazette de France," the "Journal

This confession was a strange proof of the necessity which constrains the guilty to confide their crimes either to the heart of man or the mercy of God. Sainte-Croix had, as has been stated, drawn up a confession, which was burned; and the marchioness now commits a similar imprudence.

The confession was comprised in seven articles, and commenced thus, "I confess myself to God, and to you, my father," — being a complete narration of all her crimes. In the first article she confessed to have been an incendiary; in the second, to have commenced her

du Palais," "Plaidoyer de Nivelle," or in the various pleas which were drawn up for or against the marchioness. I have availed myself of the assistance of my friends, Paulin Paris, Pillon, and Richard, who have been unable to obtain any information upon the subject, and also of the aid of the eminent bibliophilist, M. Charles Nodier, and of M. de Montmerqué; but their researches have been hitherto fruitless. It is now hopeless to think of its discovery, and I must content myself with quoting the opinion of Madame de Sévigné, in her 269th and 270th letters. "Madame de Brinvilliers acquaints us in her confession that her career of vicious indulgence began at seven years of age; that she had since continued this course, and had poisoned her father, brothers, and one of her children, and taken poison herself to test an antidote. Medea never equalled this. She acknowledged it to be her handwriting, but said that it was written during an attack of fever, and was a frenzied, incoherent production, not worth perusal. There is now no other topic of conversation but the acts and deeds of Brinvilliers. As she has written in her confession that she has killed her father, it was doubtless done from the fear of forgetting to accuse herself of the act; her alarm lest these sins may escape her recollection is excellent."

Rusico, who published at Amsterdam in 1792 a new edition of the "Causes Célèbres de Gayot de Pitaval," and who might have consulted the parliamentary papers then extant, adds: —

"Madame de Sévigné does not mention that the marchioness had made an attempt to poison her sister, — a fact which was recorded in her confession."

unchaste life at seven years of age; in the third, to have poisoned her father; in the fourth, her brothers; in the fifth, an attempt to poison her sister; and in the last two was a recital of strange and unheard of debaucheries. There was in this woman a union of Locusta and Messalina. Antiquity could offer nothing more flagitious.

Strengthened by a perfect acquaintance with this important document, M. de Palluau commenced his examination. The inquiries were of necessity very numerous, and were severally as to the cause of her flight to Liège, whether she knew of the papers found in the casket, as to the first article of her confession, and the others generally, the cause of the death of her father and her brothers, and if the latter were not brought to death through the instrumentality of Lachaussée, — to all of which she pleaded a complete ignorance of the facts charged. She admitted to have quitted France at the recommendation of her relatives upon the death of her brothers, and to have met Sainte-Croix after his liberation from the Bastille, but denied all recollection of his inducing her to attempt her father's life, or of his having given her drugs for that purpose, or having said he "knew the means to make her rich;" and, being questioned as to the reason why she had given a bond of thirty thousand livres to Sainte-Croix, she replied, it was a sum deposited with him on account of her creditors, for which she held his receipt, though during her journey it was lost, and that her husband was ignorant of this act: moreover, she could not recollect whether this was given before or after the death of her brothers. Interrogated as to her acquaintance with an apothecary named Glazer, she replied she had consulted him three times. She pretended ignorance to the last of her letters

to Theria and the danger to her by Desgrais's retention of the casket; she denied, moreover, having perceived any symptoms of her father's illness, either on his visit or return from Offemont in 1666; and explained her transactions with Penautier to have been mere matters of money lent and borrowed. Thus confining herself to a complete system of forgetfulness or denegation of the facts alleged, she arrived at Paris, and was committed to the Conciergerie, where soon other charges were added in the terrible indictment now preparing against her. These were contained chiefly in the depositions of Sergeant Clüet, which proved the anxiety of the marchioness to send Lachaussée into Picardy, and to obtain possession of the casket opened by Picard; and that she had boasted of her power to remove people who incurred her displeasure.

Edme Huet deposed to the intimacy between Sainte-Croix and the marchioness; to have seen some poison at the house of the latter, and to have recognised it as such, her father being an apothecary; that the marchioness, rather animated after a party, had one day said to her, showing her a little box, "See! this is the way to avenge yourself of your enemies, and, small as this box is, it is full of inheritances;" and that then, startled by her speech, she had enjoined silence upon it; that, Lachaussée owing her money, she had threatened Sainte-Croix to reveal what she knew, whereupon he paid her demand; and that both he and the marchioness had always poison about them in case of arrest.

There were other depositions, — from Laurent Perrette, a servant of the apothecary Glazer, and from Marie de Villeray, in the service of the marchioness; their evidence was chiefly hearsay or suspective, but tended toward the crimination of the marchioness; and, finally,

Desgrais and the attendants deposed to the facts already related that had occurred upon her journey from Liège; to which was added the statement of Françoise Roussel, who related the illness she had endured consequent upon the poison given to her by her mistress, when testing its strength before she administered it to her father.

It was difficult against so much corroborative evidence to continue her system of absolute denial; nevertheless, the marchioness persisted in asserting her innocence, and committed her defence to M. Nivelle, one of the most celebrated advocates of the day. He combated each successive count of the indictment with wonderful ability, admitted the adulterous intercourse of his client with Sainte-Croix, but denied her participation in the death of her relatives, which he imputed entirely to the revenge of Sainte-Croix, owing to their opposition to his acquaintance with the marchioness. As to her confession, he attacked its validity by citations of similar cases, where the evidence of an individual against himself had been invariably disallowed, upon the axiom *Non auditur perire volens*, — of which he quoted three instances.

A Spaniard, born at Barcelona, being condemned to die for an act of homicide, refused to confess himself at the place of execution, and this notwithstanding every entreaty. St. Thomas de Villeneuve, Archbishop of Valencia, hearing this, and wishing to save the soul of the culprit, endeavoured to induce a better frame of mind; but his surprise was great when the criminal informed him that he had every reason to curse the confessors, inasmuch as he was condemned to death owing to the revelation of his crime to a priest, who, being the brother of his victim, had betrayed him, from a desire of revenge, into the hands of justice. The archbishop,

considering the life of the man to be of less consequence than the honour of religion, made inquiry as to the truth of the statement, and, upon its confirmation by the priest, subjected him immediately to a severe punishment, and obtained the pardon of the criminal, thus securing the inviolability and sacredness of confession.

As a second example, he cited the case of an innkeeper, who murdered a guest and concealed his body in his cellar. Overcome by remorse, he avowed his crime to his confessor, and showed even the place where he had interred his victim. The relatives of the deceased, after every possible inquiry, offered a large reward for information as to his fate. Whereupon the confessor, tempted by the promised sum, secretly revealed the facts the innkeeper had confided to him. He was consequently arrested and tortured; he avowed his crime, but charged the confessor with its betrayal; upon this the court, indignant at the means made use of to obtain possession of the facts, declared him innocent and remitted his punishment, but condemned the confessor to be hanged, and his body to be thrown into the fire, — so sacred to them was the rite of confession.

The third instance was that of an Armenian and his wife, against the latter of whom a wealthy Turk had conceived designs prejudicial to her honour, threatening to slay her husband and herself if she refused consent to his wishes. She feigned compliance. Whereupon her husband, being aware of the truth, contrived to slay and bury him with her assistance. But shortly after, they confessed their crime to a priest of their nation, and he, taking advantage of the circumstance, forced from them various sums of money under threats of its revelation, until they were ruined by his exactions. When they were unable to comply any longer with his extor-

tions, he denounced them to the father of their victim. But this was not attended with the results expected; for the vizier felt as much pity for the poor Armenians as indignation against the priest who had robbed and betrayed them. He sent, therefore, for the bishop of the Armenian Church, and demanded from him the punishment due to a priest who revealed the secrets of the confessional; to which the bishop replied that the judgment in such case was death by fire, as to confess was a duty enjoined upon the guilty by the Christian religion, under pain of eternal punishment. The vizier, satisfied with this, sent for the accused and bade them relate the facts, which the wife did, urging the necessity of the case in her respect, and detailing the insatiable avarice of the priest. After this, the priest was confronted with them, and, upon the sentence of the bishop, the vizier ordered him to be burned alive, which sentence was carried into immediate execution.

Notwithstanding the effect produced by these citations, whether the judges did not allow them to be valid, or held the other evidence sufficient, it was apparent to all, from the turn the trial took, that the marchioness was to be condemned. In fact, before even the judgment was pronounced, on the 16th of July, 1676, she saw M. Pirot, doctor of the Sorbonne, enter her prison, at the request of the first president of the court. This worthy magistrate, foreseeing the result of the trial, and thinking that spiritual assistance should not be withheld until the last hour, had obtained an interview with this excellent priest, who, although he observed to the president that there were already two members attached to the Conciergerie, and that he was hardly adequate to the task, unable as he was to endure the sight of blood, yet as the president renewed his

entreaties, stating that he was most anxious to obtain the assistance of one in whom he could place the fullest reliance, he consented to undertake the painful task:[1] for the president assured him that, accustomed as he was to the recklessness of crime, Madame de Brinvilliers was endowed with a self-possession which had something fearful in its character. On the morning of his interview with M. Pirot, he had begun the examination of the prisoner, which continued thirteen hours, during which the accused had been confronted with Briancourt, one of the witnesses by whose evidence she was chiefly implicated. On the following day another examination, of five hours, had taken place, in both of which she had maintained the utmost respect toward the judges, and the proudest contempt toward the witness, — reproaching him as a miserable drunken valet, who, having been discharged for misconduct, was willing to bear false witness against her.[2] Pirot was introduced also by a letter from her sister, belonging to the convent of St. James, exhorting the marchioness in the most affectionate terms to place in him the fullest confidence, and to consider him not only as a spiritual guide, but as a sincere friend. She had just returned from the court when M. Pirot entered, where she had for three hours

[1] The following narrative of the last hours of the Marquise de Brinvilliers is drawn up from a MS. left by M. Pirot, which is mentioned by Gayot de Pitaval, "Causes Celèbres" tome 1, page 309, Amsterdam, 1764, but which has hitherto remained unpublished. It was placed in the hands of Monsieur Dumas by his learned friend, Paulin Paris.

[2] The first president consequently had no hope of being able to influence her mind but through the medium of religion; for it was not sufficient to decapitate her in the Place de la Grève; her poisons must perish with her, or society would obtain no advantage from her death.

persisted in her course of denial, although the president, in reminding her of the awful situation in which she stood, appearing for the last time before men, so soon to be ushered into the presence of her God, had done this in a manner so affecting that the oldest judges, and those most accustomed to such scenes, had shed tears. As soon, therefore, as the marchioness perceived him, not doubting but that he came as the messenger of death, she advanced toward him, saying, —

"You come then, monsieur, to announce — "

But upon this she was interrupted by Father Chavigny, who accompanied M. Pirot.

"Madame," said he, "let us begin with prayer."

They knelt together, Madame de Brinvilliers requesting the attendants to add for her sake a prayer to the Virgin; at the conclusion of their supplications, she resumed.

"Assuredly, monsieur," said she, "you come at the request of the president to console me, and it is with you that I must pass the little which remains to me of life."

"Madame," replied the doctor, "I come to administer to you all the spiritual consolation in my power. I can only wish it were not upon an occasion of this kind."

"Monsieur," the marchioness replied, "we must resign ourselves to our misfortunes." Then, turning toward Father Chavigny, "Father," she continued, "I am obliged to you for this introduction of M. Pirot, and for your promised visits to this place. Pray to God, I beseech you, for me. For the future I shall address myself only to your friend, as I must confer with him on matters which admit no other hearer. Farewell, and may God reward you for the kindness you would so willingly have exercised toward me."

Upon this Chavigny departed, leaving the marchioness with M. Pirot and the prison attendants. This was in a large room in the tower of Montgommery. At its extremity there was a bed for the woman in attendance, and another for the guard. It was the same in which the poet Théophile had been confined, and near the door some of his verses were then to be seen, written by his own hand. The guard, perceiving the cause of the doctor's visit, immediately withdrew toward the lower part of the room. Believing then that her sentence had been already pronounced, the marchioness started the conversation with a reference to it; but M. Pirot acquainted her that at present this was not the case, adding that he did not know precisely when it would be, or what might be the result.

"I have no anxiety about the future," she replied. "If my sentence be not yet pronounced, it will be to-morrow. I expect it to be death; and the only hope I indulge is that of delay between judgment and its execution; for were I led forth to die to-day, I should have but little time to prepare, and I feel, monsieur, how much need I have of more. Yes," she continued after a pause, "the more I reflect, the more I am convinced that a day is far too short a respite to enable me to appear before the tribunal of my Maker to abide his judgment, having suffered that of man."

Upon this the doctor assured her that even should sentence of death be pronounced that day, it would not be executed until the morrow. "Yet," he added, "though death be yet uncertain, I highly approve of your resolution to prepare for it as though pronounced."

Thus the conversation was for some time continued, — the marchioness intimating her intention to confess the events of her past life, but desirous first to ascertain

the opinion of M. Pirot as to her innocence or guilt, and what course he would now recommend her to adopt. To which he replied that he was well aware of the fearful crimes with which she was charged, and that it was impossible to hope for pardon from God unless she revealed, not only the nature of the poison, but its antidote, and the names of her accomplices; it was due to society that this reparation should be made, for, without this, as the system might be continued, she would be accountable for the crimes thus committed after her death; and to crime in death, added he, there is no remission of punishment; to obtain this, our crimes must perish first.

To these opinions the marchioness acceded, but anxiously asked whether there were not sins of so deep a dye, so fearful in number, that the Church dared not remit them; and if the justice of Heaven could enumerate, was it possible for its mercy to forgive them.

Pirot upon this replied, whilst his heart recoiled from her with fear, that he supposed this question was put in merely a general way, and without particular reference to the state of her conscience; but assured her that there were no sins to which mercy could not be extended; that this was an article of faith, and that she could not be a true Catholic if she doubted its truth; adding that despair and impenitence alone were irremissible sins.

The marchioness prayed earnestly for grace to receive this truth, professing her sincere belief, but adding that she was fearful the Almighty would withhold pardon from one so unworthy and undeserving of the blessings she had enjoyed. The doctor reassured her, and it was whilst thus conversing that he formed the following estimation of her character: —

"She was a woman naturally brave, and endowed originally with a meek and virtuous imagination, yet seemingly indifferent to the impressions it received; her mind was active and acute; her ideas clear and decisive, and expressed with precision and brevity, — ready with expedients in cases of difficulty, and at once resolving upon the course to be pursued; yet withal, trifling and inconstant, impatient of repetition, which induced M. Pirot not infrequently to change the subject of discourse or reintroduce it in a more varied form. She spoke seldom, yet well, — without study and without affectation; she was always self-possessed, and never misled into inconsiderate expressions. It would have been impossible, either by her conversation or appearance, to have imagined one so fearfully criminal as confession proved her to be; it is the more a matter of surprise wherein we must submissively adore the judgment of God, that when man is abandoned to his own will, one blessed with a soul of a naturally elevated nature, a presence of mind amidst the most unforeseen events, firmness nothing could shake, and a resolution to await and endure death if need be, could have thus retrograded and become capable of so great a crime as parricide. She was of a slight figure; her hair was of chestnut colour and very thick; the head well formed, eyes blue, of a mild expression, and very beautiful; skin extremely fair and her features by no means disagreeable, yet not collectively alluring; her age was forty-six, yet she looked much older. Her face generally presented a mild and calm expression, yet at intervals, when sorrowful or excited, the feeling was evinced by a look in some degree fearful, and her emotions of scorn or anger were marked by a kind of convulsive, painful movement."

During this first sketch of her past life she remembered that the doctor had not attended Mass, which she besought him instantly to do in the chapel of the Conciergerie; praying him to say it on her account, and in honour of our Lady, whose intercession she might thus

obtain, as the Virgin was her patroness, to whom, amidst all her crimes and dissoluteness, she had never ceased to offer up her prayers. To this M. Pirot consented, and upon his return he heard, from a M. Seney, that the sentence of death upon the marchioness was pronounced, and that her hand was to be cut off. This rigorous addition to her punishment, which was subsequently mitigated, induced him immediately to revisit his penitent. Upon his entrance she received him with much serenity, hoping that he had earnestly prayed for her, and requesting to know whether she should have the consolation of receiving the sacrament before death.

"Madame," replied the doctor, "if you are condemned, you will then certainly be deprived of that consolation, and I should but deceive if I could encourage such an expectation."

He then cited the case of the Constable Saint-Paul, against which the marchioness mentioned those of MM. de Cinq-Mars and de Thou.

"I do not think," said M. Pirot, "that this was a favour conceded to them, as it is not related either in the Memoirs of Montresor, or in any other work which gives details of their execution."

M. Pirot then stated that the usual regulations as regarded criminals would be observed in respect to her; that communion was not absolutely requisite for salvation; that there was a spiritual communion in reading the Word; and that if she detested her crime, had faith and charity, death would be as a martyrdom and a second baptism.

The marchioness now contrasted her situation with what it would have been had she died at Liège impenitent, or without the expiation of her crimes upon the scaffold; she expressed the sincere regret she felt for the

boldness and indifference evinced toward her judges, avowing a perfect submission to the sentence to be pronounced by the president, and good-will toward her prosecutor who had obtained it, — thanking them both with much humility, as her future salvation seemed dependent upon its infliction. The doctor was about to encourage this feeling, when the door opened and dinner was announced.

The marchioness immediately placed herself at table along with the attendants of the prison, who never quitted her apartment, with a mind and manner as easy and unembarrassed as though she were doing the honours of her own table. She desired the two men and the woman who watched and attended upon her to seat themselves at the table, and, turning toward the doctor, —

"Monsieur," said she, "you will excuse ceremony upon your account. These excellent persons have been accustomed to take their meals with me, for the sake of society; and we will now avail ourselves of it if you have no objection." Then, turning toward the woman, she said, "My poor Madame de Rus, I have been very troublesome to you for some time, but have a little more patience; you will soon be rid of me. You can go to Draset to-morrow; you will have time enough for that, for at about seven or eight o'clock you will have nothing more to do with me, for I shall be entirely engaged with my confessor, and you will not be allowed to enter. From that hour you are free, for I do not think you would have the heart to stay and witness my execution."

She said this with the most perfect self-possession and simplicity; and as those present turned aside to conceal their tears, she herself seemed to feel for them. Then, observing that the dinner remained upon the

table, no one partaking of it, she invited the doctor to take his soup, apologising for its common quality as unfit to be offered to him. For herself, she took some broth and two eggs, excusing herself to her companions for not having offered to assist them, but pointing out also that neither knife nor fork had been allowed her so to do. Shortly after, she asked permission of the doctor to drink to his good health, to which he replied by a similar request, at which act of condescension she seemed greatly pleased.

"To-morrow," said she, as she placed her glass upon the table, "is a fast day, and although — "

"Madame," replied M. Pirot, "if your usual food be requisite for your support, you need not be scrupulous; for the rule of the Church is not compulsory in a case of this kind."

The marchioness promised to avail herself of the privilege if it were necessary, but hoped that with some slight addition to the day's fare, and the two fresh eggs she should take after the question, it would be unnecessary. "It is true," says the priest from whom these details are obtained, "that I was dismayed at this *sang-froid*, and hearing her order with the greatest calmness the slight addition to her usual meal."

The dinner over, writing materials were brought in; but prior to beginning the confession of her crimes, she addressed a letter to her husband. For at this period she exhibited so much affection for him that the doctor, wishing to test its sincerity, remarked that he feared it was not reciprocated, since her husband had abandoned her during the trial. The marchioness, however, observed that we must not always judge by appearances. M. de Brinvilliers had ever felt an interest in her, and had fulfilled in all respects his duty in so far as it was

within his power; that their correspondence had been always continued; if he had not visited her in prison, it was because, being overwhelmed with debts, he could not return to Paris. Her letter to him expressed the kindest feeling; she requested forgiveness for her conduct, and fully pardoned her enemies, who had brought her to the disgraceful death she was to suffer. She expressed a hope also that he would forgive the ignominy this might cast upon himself, and concluded by confiding her children to his care, and recommending him to consult, for their sakes, Madame Marillac and Madame Constè, — with a fervent request for his prayers on her behalf.

The doctor read this letter with attention, but remarked that one of its sentences was unbecoming; it was that which mentioned her enemies. He said:

"You have had no enemies but your crimes; and those persons to whom you allude as enemies are those who revere the memory of your father and your brothers, whom you should have loved much more than they did."

"But, monsieur," replied the marchioness, "are they not my enemies who have thus pursued me unto death, and is it not a Christian duty to pardon and forgive them?"

"Madame," he replied, "they are not your enemies. You are the enemy of the human race; no one is yours, for it is impossible to think of your crimes without the deepest horror."

"And for that very reason," she answered, "I bear no resentment against them, and would earnestly wish to see in Paradise those who have most contributed to bring me into the situation in which I am."

"Madame," said the doctor, "what mean you? It is thus they speak sometimes who wish the death of others. Explain yourself, I request."

"Heaven forbid," she continued, "that you should place such a construction upon my words! May they, on the contrary, enjoy a long prosperity in this world, and infinite glory in that to come! Dictate another letter, monsieur, and I will write what you consider most becoming."

This letter finished, the marchioness now wished to give attention exclusively to her confession, and requested the doctor to write from her narration; "for," said she, "I have committed so many sins that, were I to do this verbally, I should never be assured I had fully revealed them." They then knelt, praying for the grace of the Holy Spirit; and after repeating the "Veni Creator," "Salve Regina," and the "Confiteor," the marchioness began her narration. At nine o'clock Father Chavigny entered the room, and although the marchioness seemed vexed at his visit, she nevertheless received him in a friendly manner.

"But why has he come?" added she, turning toward the doctor.

"It is better," replied he, "that you should not be left alone."

"Are you about to leave me, then?" she exclaimed, with a thrill almost of terror.

"Madame," answered Pirot. "I will comply with your wishes; yet I should feel obliged if you would allow me to return home for a few hours, during which Chavigny will remain."

"Ah, monsieur," she cried, in much excitement, "you promised not to quit me but in death, and you now leave me! Oh, think that it was this morning only that I saw you for the first time, and that already you are more to me than one even of my oldest friends."

To this Pirot answered that if now he sought repose,

it was but to renew his duties with more effect upon the morrow, adding that it was the more necessary as, should that be her last day, they would have need, even by her own admission, of all the energies they possessed. He reminded her that he had been engaged for thirteen hours in prayer and other offices on her account; stating also that, his health being weak, he was fearful that, without the relaxation he now sought, he should be unable to assist her at the last. The marchioness pressed his attendance no longer, but would not permit his departure without refreshment, and desired a carriage to be fetched for him, still earnestly entreating his return at six o'clock the next day. Upon returning the next morning, Pirot found Chavigny and the marchioness in prayer; the former was in tears, but the latter, always calm, received him with the same feeling which she had shown on his departure.

After detailing how the night had been passed, — in writing to her sister, Madame de Marillac, and to M. Consté, in prayer, accompanied by Chavigny, with an interval only of two hours' quiet sleep, she complied with the proposal of M. Pirot, and resumed her devotions with the "Veni Sancte Spiritus." This concluded, he was about to continue her confession, when she said: —

"Monsieur, permit me first to ask a question upon a point of great anxiety to me. You gave me yesterday great hopes in the mercy of God, but I dare not think that I can finally be saved without the pains of purgatory. Were even my love of God much more intense than it can be, I could not expect salvation without suffering the punishment which is due unto my sins. Now I have heard that the fire of the place where the soul lingers for a time is similar in all respects to that of

hell, where the condemned remain for ever. Tell me now, I pray you, — how can the soul, which feels its existence in purgatory at the moment of its separation from the body, be assured that it is not in hell? How can it be aware that the fire which burns without destroying will be one day withheld? — since the torment it endures is as that of the damned, the place similar, the punishment the same."

"Madame," replied the doctor, "God is too just to add doubt to the punishment he inflicts. At the moment of the separation of the soul, it receives the judgment of the Creator, hears the sentence which condemns, or the mercy which absolves; knows whether it be renewed in the spirit, or abides in mortal sin; whether it be in the fire that is never quenched, or the flames which endure but for a time. The sentence you will hear the moment the sword of the executioner has freed you from this life, — unless, already redeemed, you pass immediately into the presence of the blessed."

The marchioness expressed her entire faith in his opinions; and, feeling her mind more composed, she continued her confession until the expiration of about an hour and a half, when the first registrar arrived to read to her the judgment pronounced by the court. She received the order to descend for this purpose with much calmness, still kneeling, and slightly turning her head; then, without the slightest tremor in her voice, said directly: —

"I have but a few words to add, and then I shall be entirely resigned to you."

Thereupon, with the utmost tranquillity, she finished the dictation of her confession to the doctor, besought him to offer up with her a short prayer; then, putting on her veil, and taking with her a book of prayer

which Chavigny had left, she followed the turnkey to the torture-chamber, where her sentence was to be read. They began by an examination which lasted five hours; during which she revealed all she had promised, but denied any accomplices, affirming that she knew neither in what the poisons consisted, nor their antidotes; and at the end of this, the judges, finding no further information could be obtained, desired the registrar to read her sentence. After reciting the indictment, it continued thus: —

"That the marchioness should make a public avowal of, and demand pardon for, her crimes before the principal entrance of Notre Dame; to which she should be taken in a common cart, barefooted, a rope around her neck, holding a lighted torch of about two pounds' weight, and thence be conducted to the Place de Grève, where she should be decapitated, her body burnt, and her ashes scattered to the winds,— being first submitted to the torture of both kinds to obtain the names of her accomplices; declaring, moreover, all her property inherited by her from her family confiscated; and levying, also, a fine of four thousand livres to the king, four hundred for Masses for the repose of the souls of her victims, ten thousand livres to the Dame Mangot, and the entire expenses of her own trial and that of Lachaussée. Dated July, 1676."

She heard her sentence without fear, and without the slightest weakness; but when it was finished, —

"Monsieur," said she to the registrar, "have the goodness to repeat it: the cart, which was unexpected, so engaged my attention that I was indifferent to the rest."

The registrar complied with her request. Then she was given over to the executioner, and he advanced toward her; she immediately recognised him by the

rope in his hands, and quietly joined and extended her own, regarding him coldly from head to foot, but without uttering a word. The judges retired in succession, and displayed as they did so the terrible apparatus of the torture. The marchioness surveyed it with the utmost firmness; then, perceiving three buckets of water, she turned to the registrar, not wishing to speak to the executioner, and said: —

"It is to drown me, doubtless, that so much water has been brought here; for surely, monsieur, considering my size, you have not, I trust, the desire to make me swallow it."

The executioner, without a word, took off her veil, and successively all her clothes, then placed her against the wall, and made her sit upon the wooden frame of the ordinary torture, which was about two feet high. The questions as to her accomplices, etc., were now again repeated, to which she replied as before, adding only, —

"If you will not believe my word, my body is in your power; you can torture that."

The registrar upon this made a sign to the executioner. He fastened immediately the feet of the marchioness to two rings placed before her; then turning her body backward, he fixed her hands also to two rings in the wall, distant about three feet from each other. By this the head was at the same height as the feet, whilst the body, supported by the trestle, formed a half curve, as if resting upon a wheel. Still further to stretch the limbs, the executioner gave the rack two turns, which brought the feet before distant about a foot from the rings, six inches nearer. The following is the *procès-verbal*, which can alone relate the horrors which ensued: —

"Upon the small trestle, and during the racking, she several times said, 'Oh, my God! they kill me, and yet I have spoken truth.' Water [1] was given; she was much convulsed, but said only, 'You slay me.' Admonished to name her accomplices, she replied that she had only one, a man, who, ten years since, had asked for poison to rid himself of his wife, but that he was dead. Whereupon the torture was repeated; she was slightly convulsed, but would not speak. It was again repeated, with similar results. Admonished to say why, if she had no accomplice, she had written from the Conciergerie to Penautier, to urge him to do all for her he could, reminding him her interests were his, she replied that she had never been certainly aware of any connexion between Penautier and Sainte-Croix relative to his poisons, but that as a bill had been found in the casket of Sainte-Croix which concerned Penautier, and as she had seen them often together, she thought this friendship might have extended to a commerce of this kind between them; that certainly she had ventured to write to Penautier as if she knew it was so, such a step not affecting her interests, for either he was an accomplice with Sainte-Croix or he was not; if he was, he would do all in his power to assist her; if not, it was but a letter lost, and that was all. The torture was repeated; she was greatly convulsed, but said she could add nothing to her former statement; to do so would be to sin against her conscience."

[1] The water was given thus: The executioner had near him four jars full of water, each containing about two pints and a half, and for the extraordinary torture eight of the same size, making for the ordinary ten, and for the latter twenty, pints of water, which the victim was forced to swallow. The executioner held a vessel like a wine-strainer in his hand; he placed this against the mouth, and poured two pints and a half down it, leaving an interval for the prisoner to confess, or reply to the questions put; but if the prisoner continued to deny, he renewed the operation until the eight jars were empty. This was supposed to cause all the horrible feelings of death by drowning, and was protracted with the most cruel art.

The ordinary torture was now concluded. Already had the sufferer swallowed the half of the water she had thought to be sufficient to drown her. They now proceeded to the extraordinary application of its pains: thereupon, instead of the trestle of two feet and a half, one of three feet and a half high was placed beneath her, and as this was done without extending the cords, the limbs were again stretched, and the ligatures at the wrists and feet were so compressed that the flesh was cut and the blood flowed rapidly. The *procès-verbal* continues:

"The torture by the injection of water was renewed, whereupon she cried several times, in great agony, beseeching the mercy of Heaven. Again admonished to confess, she said they might kill her, but she would not lay the guilt of perjury upon her soul. The torture was repeated; she was again convulsed, but was silent. Admonished to reveal the composition of her poisons and their antidote, she replied that she was ignorant of this, remembering only that toads formed a part; that Sainte-Croix had never revealed the secret; she thought, moreover, they were not prepared by him, but by the apothecary Glazer; some she thought were merely arsenical; that as for the antidote, she believed it was only milk, and that Sainte-Croix had said that, provided it had been taken in the morning, and a glass of it upon the first effects of the poison, there was then no cause to fear. Admonished to say whether she had more to add to this, she replied that she had confessed all she knew; that they might now slay her, but she could reveal no more. The torture was twice repeated, but she spoke not. Upon the third time, she answered only with a deep groan and an ejaculation to Heaven. Upon which she was unbound, removed from the rack, and placed before the fire in the customary manner."

It was near this, stretched upon the bed of torture, that Pirot met her again; for, feeling himself utterly unable to endure the horror of such a scene, he had

obtained her sanction to retire and say a Mass, to the end the Almighty might endow her with patience and courage to endure her fearful pains; nor had he prayed in vain.

"Ah, monsieur!" said the marchioness, as soon as she perceived him, "I have long desired your return, to receive your consolations. Oh! this torture has been prolonged, and dreadfully afflicting; but now I have no more to deal with men, and God alone now will occupy my thoughts."

"And on that account," replied the priest, "these sufferings are to be considered as blessings, every torture being now the means of inclining you toward Heaven; therefore, to God alone must your thoughts and hopes be directed, and from him must you demand, like the penitent King of Israel, a place amidst the elect of his people."

Upon this the marchioness arose, supported by the doctor and the executioner, and, entering the chapel, the two former knelt at the celebration of the Mass. By this time some persons, induced by curiosity, had gained admittance; as they could not be excluded, whilst their presence disturbed the devotions of the marchioness, the executioner closed the choir, and placed his prisoner behind the high altar. It was then that Pirot, for the first time, marked the change which had taken place in her appearance. Her face, ordinarily pale, was highly flushed; her eyes gleamed with feverish excitement, and her body was overcome by fits of convulsive shivering. The doctor wished to address to her a few words of consolation, but she interrupted him, saying: —

"Are you aware of the ignominy and disgrace of my sentence? Do you know it includes fire?"

He made her no answer, but, believing her in want of refreshment, desired the executioner to bring some wine. The gaoler appeared soon after with it: the marchioness barely sipped a little, and returned the glass to Pirot, who, perceiving at the time that her neck was uncovered, placed his handkerchief around her, and asked the gaoler for a pin to fasten it; but he delaying so to do, as if afraid she might strangle herself, she said, with a melancholy smile: —

"Ah! monsieur, you have now nothing to fear. M. Pirot will be my guarantee. I shall not attempt to use it against myself."

The gaoler immediately offered it, expressing regret at his delay; and, assuring her that, whatever others might have done, he had never suspected such an act, he requested to be permitted to kiss her hand, which she instantly gave, beseeching him to offer up prayers to God for her sake.

This he very feelingly promised to do, and as he retired she again thus addressed Pirot: —

"Did you hear me, monsieur? I said there was even fire in my sentence, — fire! do you understand me? and although it may be said that my body will not be cast into the flames until after death, it is still an infamous reproach to my memory; they spare me the pains of death by fire, and thereby may free me from a death of despair, but disgrace is nevertheless stamped upon my name, and it is of that I think."

"Madame," he replied, "it is a matter equally indifferent whether your body may be cast into the flames to be thus reduced to ashes, or committed to earth to be there devoured by worms; whether it be drawn upon a hurdle and cast into the common sewer, or embalmed with the spices of the East and laid in a monarch's

tomb. Perish as it may, it will rise again, more glorious, it may be, than that of some king of the earth which now reposes in its gilded coffin; the pomp of the grave is for those that survive, and not for the dead."

At this instant a noise was heard at the door of the choir; the doctor immediately advanced, and found that it arose from a tradesman who disputed with the executioner to obtain entrance. It appeared that he had sold to Madame de Brinvilliers, before her departure from France, a carriage for which she still owed an instalment of two hundred francs. The marchioness, not knowing the cause of the disturbance, called immediately to Pirot, who hastened with the executioner to her.

"Has my hour come?" said she. "I am hardly yet prepared; but no matter, I am ready."

Pirot reassured her, and explained the cause.

"He is right," she replied. "Tell him," addressing herself to the executioner, "that I will see the debt discharged as far as it is in my power." Then, as he left, she said to Pirot, "Must I so soon depart? Can they not spare me a little longer? For, although I am ready, as I said, I am not, indeed, I am not prepared!"

"We may probably, madame," he replied, "yet have time granted us until the evening."

But as the marchioness seemed yet doubtful and anxious upon this, the executioner, who had heard the conversation, and judged his evidence to be conclusive, turned his head from the other side of the altar, and assured her that she had three or four hours to live. She thanked him, and, turning toward the doctor, expressed a desire of leaving to her sister the rosary she carried, but added: —

"I am fearful that, upon recollecting the crime I

meditated against her, she will shrink from its acceptance; but should this not be the case, it would be a great consolation to me to think she wears it after my death, and that thus I may be remembered in prayer."

The doctor comforted her by recalling to mind the kindness she had already experienced, and besought her to pray earnestly, as became a repentant criminal, adding that he would himself deliver the rosary to Mademoiselle d'Aubray, — most certain that it would be affectionately received.

Seven o'clock struck, and as the sound yet vibrated through the chapel, the executioner stood before her. She knew the hour had now come, and, seizing the doctor's arm, exclaimed: "A few moments more! yet a few moments, I beseech you!"

The executioner now tied her hands, and with a tolerably firm step she advanced to the altar, between the chaplain of the prison and Pirot; they here sung, "Veni Creator," "Salve Regina," and "Tantum Ergo," and Pirot bestowed the final benediction of the holy sacrament; she was then led from the chapel, supported by the doctor and the executioner's assistant. About ten or twelve persons had now assembled, whereupon, finding herself suddenly before them, she drew back, and although her hands were tied, contrived to pull her cap over the greater part of her face, and by this movement broke the rosary, from which a few beads fell. She continued, however, still to advance, but was stopped by the doctor until the assistant had collected the beads, and placed them in her hands; she thanked him with great humility for his kindness, and added:

"I know I have nothing left me in this world, as even the clothes I have upon me belong to you; but I beg before I die that you will suffer me to give this

rosary to M. Pirot; it is valueless in itself, and I deliver it to him only that he may, on my part, convey it to my sister."

"Madame," replied the man, "although it is the custom that the clothes of the criminal belong to us, you may freely dispose of what you have, were it a matter even of much greater value."

The priest who led her by the arm, felt a thrill as the pride of the marchioness acknowledged his civility, but the feeling that arose from this was internal, and her face exhibited no trace of the emotion. She had now reached the vestibule of the Conciergerie, between the courtyard and the first gate, where she was seated until the dress was put on in which the public confession was to be made. At every step her distressing anxiety increased, and it was in the deepest anguish she turned and saw the executioner with the shift worn by the criminals in his hands. The door of the vestibule was next opened, and about fifty spectators were admitted; amongst whom were the Comtesse de Soissons, Madame du Refugé, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, M. de Roquelaure, and the Abbé de Chimay; the marchioness upon this was overcome by shame, and, leaning toward the doctor, said: —

"And will this man undress me again, as in the torture-chamber? Are not these preparations cruel, turning my thoughts at such a time from God?"

The executioner heard this, and reassured her, saying that the dress he held would be passed over her other clothes; this done, he then raised her cap, tied her hands again with the cord, placed a rope around her waist and neck, and then kneeling, took off her stockings and slippers. She now raised her manacled hands toward Pirot.

"Oh! monsieur," said she, "you witness what they do! Pray, pray, approach and console me!"

He did so, sustaining her head upon his breast, and endeavoured to assuage her grief; but she, in a tone of the most heart-rending grief, added, casting her eyes upon the crowd, who intently watched the scene:—

"Oh! does not this appear a strange and barbarous curiosity?"

"Madame," replied he, while the tears were in his eyes, "consider not the earnestness of these people from such a point of view, although it be the true one; think of it only as a part of the expiation of your crimes."

As he said this, the executioner placed the lighted torch in her hands, and as it was very heavy, Pirot supported it with his right hand, whilst the registrar for the second time read the sentence aloud. During this she was greatly agitated, and still more so when, upon entering the vestibule, she saw the crowd which awaited the procession in the yard; she then stopped, and with a passionate movement, as if she would bury her feet in the earth, said:—

"Monsieur! think you that, after this, M. de Brinvilliers can possess so little feeling as to endure life?"

The doctor tried to calm her excitement, but his words were in vain; her face became convulsed, her eyebrows sternly knit, her eyes seemed to emit fire, her mouth was distorted, and for a moment the demon reappeared in every feature.

During this paroxysm, which lasted a quarter of an hour, Lebrun, who was close by, became so impressed by the effect that the following night, unable to sleep and having its reflection continually present to his mind, he made the beautiful sketch now in the Louvre, and near this a sketch of a tiger, to show that the principal

traits in both were the same. She advanced with the crucifix in her hand to the door of the prison, where the cart awaited her. It was one of the smallest that could be obtained, bearing yet about it the signs of the low purposes for which it was used, — without a seat, containing a little straw scattered about in it, and drawn by a wretched horse, which seemed to complete the ignominy of the vehicle. The executioner made her get in first, which she did with great quickness, as if to avoid the gaze of the crowd, crouching like a wild beast in the left corner, with her back turned toward the people. Pirot next got in and seated himself on her right hand; then the executioner, who was placed before her, stretching his legs between those of the doctor. His assistant was seated outside, with his back toward them and his legs upon the shafts.

It was thus that Madame de Sévigné, who was upon the bridge of Notre Dame, with *la bonne Descars*, saw a cap only (Letter 69) as the marchioness was conducted to Notre Dame. The procession had scarcely advanced a few steps when her face became hideously convulsed again, which so much alarmed the doctor that he earnestly besought the explanation of her emotion. She at first denied that there was any; but upon his repeating the entreaty, she cast her eyes upon the executioner, and besought him to sit in front, so as to conceal *that man*. Saying this, she raised her manacled hands toward a man who followed the cart on horseback. The executioner turned his head, and complied immediately with her wish, making a sign as he did so as if he would say, "Yes, yes; I understand well what it is;" and as upon this the doctor becoming more urgent in his inquiries, she said: —

"The man who has followed the cart so closely is

Desgrais, who arrested me at Liège, and who so ill-used me when his prisoner; so that I could not, seeing him thus here, overcome the emotion you have observed."

The doctor endeavoured to subdue the feeling, reminding her that Desgrais had but fulfilled his instructions; upon which, after a violent struggle, the marchioness requested the executioner to resume his former position. He hesitated at first, but upon an intimation of Pirot's he did so, and the marchioness regarded Desgrais with a mild expression, repeating a prayer on his behalf.

They had now reached the square before Notre Dame; the executioner got out, lifted the marchioness from the cart, and placed her upon the pavement, followed by M. Pirot, and ascended the steps of the church, and placed himself behind her, — the registrar being on the right hand and the executioner upon the left, and around her a vast concourse of persons who were in the church, of which all the doors were open. They made her kneel, and placed in her hands the lighted torch, which hitherto the doctor had almost always borne. The registrar then read her public confession, which she began to repeat, but in so low a tone that the executioner desired her to raise her voice, saying, "Louder! louder!" whereupon with firmness and solemnity, she slowly uttered: —

"I acknowledge that, wickedly and revengefully, I have poisoned my father and my brothers, and attempted similarly the life of my sister, to obtain possession of their property, for which I ask pardon of God, the king, and the laws of the realm."

This concluded, the executioner raised her in his arms and placed her in the cart, but without giving her again the torch; the doctor followed, and the procession moved toward the Place de Grève. From that moment until they reached the scaffold her eyes were never raised

from the crucifix which M. Pirot held in his left hand, — endeavouring, by the consolations of religion, to divert her attention from the fearful murmur which at intervals arose around them, amidst which it was easy to distinguish some violent imprecations.

Upon reaching the Place de Grève, the cart stopped at some distance from the scaffold, when the registrar, M. Drouet, approached the marchioness, and asked her if she wished to add anything to her previous confession, as the twelve commissioners were at the Hôtel de Ville, and were prepared to receive it. M. Pirot advised her for the last time to confess all she knew; but the marchioness replied, "I have said all I know and can say no more;" which, at the instigation of the doctor, she repeated as loudly as she was now able to do. Some delay occurred, owing to the difficulty of reaching the scaffold in consequence of the crowd, during which awful interval she regarded M. Pirot with a calm look, and said: —

"Monsieur, it is not here that we must separate; you have promised not to quit me in life, — I trust you will keep your word."

"Most certainly, madame," he replied; "death alone will part us. I will not quit you; do not disturb your mind with such a fear."

"I expected this of you," she replied; "you will be with me upon the scaffold — near me. And now I must bid you farewell; and as that which awaits me upon the scaffold may by its awful preparations divert my mind, suffer me now to express my gratitude; for if I am inclined humbly to endure the sentence of the judges of earth, and contritely to await that of Heaven, it is to you, to your cares, that I owe this merciful disposition of mind. All that remains for me now is to beseech

your forgiveness for the anxiety and trouble I have caused:" and as tears prevented his reply, she continued: "Is it not so? You do fully forgive me?"

He wished to reassure her, but dared not attempt it, lest his grief should overcome him; the marchioness, observing this, again said: —

"I entreat you, monsieur, to forgive me, and not to regret the time you have bestowed on me. You will say upon the scaffold the 'De Profundis' upon my death-stroke, and a Mass to-morrow for me. You will do this: you will promise me: is it not so?"

"Yes, madame," said he, hardly able to reply; "be composed, — I will comply with every request."

At this instant the executioner approached the cart, and lifted the marchioness from it, followed by the doctor; she then ascended the scaffold, and was made to kneel before a bar of wood which divided it. The priest knelt by her side, his face toward the Hôtel de Ville, whilst the marchioness fronted the river; so that in this manner he was enabled to address her to the last.

The executioner now cut off the hair which hung around her neck; and although these preparations lasted half an hour, and were at times even harshly conducted, she uttered no complaint, and gave no other signs of grief than by the tears which silently fell, evincing her inward agony of mind. He next removed the upper part of the dress she had worn from the Conciergerie, bound a handkerchief over her eyes, and desired her to hold her head erect, which she did, apparently intent only on the exhortations of the doctor, repeating at intervals the prayers he recited, when they bore immediate reference to her situation. The executioner had in the mean time drawn from beneath the folds of his

mantle a long sabre, which he had thus hitherto concealed; and as, after pronouncing absolution, M. Pirot saw he was not yet ready, he said these words as a form of prayer, which the marchioness slowly repeated after him:

"Jesus, son of David and of Mary, have pity upon me; Mary, daughter of David, and mother of Jesus, pray for me; my God, I abandon my body, which is but dust, and leave it to man to burn, and cast it as ashes to the wind, in the fulness of faith that you will raise it once again, and reunite it to my soul; suffer, O Lord, that my soul may reascend to the source whence it proceeded; from you it came, unto you let it return; and as you are of it the origin and commencement, so likewise, O Lord, be its continuance and end!"

The words were hardly uttered when the doctor heard a dull, heavy blow, like the sound given by a cleaver when dividing flesh upon a block, and immediately the voice ceased. The sword had passed so swiftly that the doctor had not noticed the flash of the steel, and for the moment, not seeing the head fall, feared the executioner's hand had failed, and that he was about to repeat the stroke. But his fear was momentary; the head almost directly inclined toward the left side, fell upon the shoulder, and thence rolled behind, whilst the body fell forward, supported by the rail, and so remained exposed to the gaze of the populace, whilst the doctor stood and repeated, as he had promised, a "De Profundis." As he finished, the executioner stood before him.

"Well, monsieur," said he, as he coolly wiped his face, "was not that an excellent stroke? I commend myself always to God on such occasions, and he has never deserted me hitherto. For many days this lady has disquieted me; but I had six Masses said, and felt my heart strengthened and upheld."

Upon this, he drew a bottle from beneath his mantle, raised it to his lips, and drank a little; then, taking under one arm the body dressed as it was, and with the other hand picking up the head, he threw both upon the wood-pile behind the scaffold, to which his assistant immediately set fire.

"On the morrow," says Madame de Sévigné, "the bones of the marchioness were sought for, as the people believed she was a saint."

In 1814, M. d'Offemont, father of the present proprietor of the château where the marchioness poisoned her father, alarmed at the approach of the allied troops, made in one of the towers numerous hiding-places, wherein he placed his silver plate, and other valuable property. On the retirement of the army beyond the frontier, he ventured to withdraw them; and as he sounded the walls, for fear of omitting any portion of the property, one of them returned a hollow sound, indicating a cavity unknown. The wall was immediately pulled down, and displayed a large cabinet, fitted up as a laboratory, in which they found a furnace, chemical instruments, several phials hermetically sealed, containing a liquid still unknown, and four packets of different-coloured powders. Unfortunately, those who discovered them attached too little importance to them, and instead of submitting these to the investigation of modern science, destroyed all they found, frightened themselves at the deadly substance that they probably contained. Thus was lost this unexpected and probably last opportunity of analysing the ingredients of the poisons of Sainte-Croix and the Marquise de Brinvilliers.

THE CENCI.

THE CENCI.

If, gentle reader, you were at Rome, and visited the Villa Pamfili, you would doubtless (after having enjoyed, amidst its gardens and ornamental fountains, the cool retreats so seldom to be met with in the capital of the Christian world) descend toward the Janiculum by a delightful road, in which, about halfway, stands the fountain Paulina. Passing this, and having lingered for a short time upon the terrace of the church of San Pietro in Montorio, which commands a view of the entire extent of Rome, you would next visit the cloister of Bramante, in the centre of which, at the depth of a few feet, upon the spot where St. Peter was crucified, a little temple, of a mixed Greek and Christian architecture, is erected, from whence you would reascend, through one of its side-doors, into the church itself.

Your cicerone would now point out to you, in the first chapel to the right, the "Christ Scourged" of Sebastian del Piombo, and in the third, to the left, "Christ in the Sepulchre," by Fiamingo; and, these *chefs-d'œuvre* examined, he would next lead you to the pictures painted at each extremity of its transept by Vasari and Salviati, showing you, and regretfully, a copy of the "Martyrdom" of St. Peter, by Guido, upon the principal altar, where, for three centuries, the

"Transfiguration of Raphael," taken away by the French in 1809, and restored to the Pope by the Allies in 1814, was almost worshipped. As you probably have already admired this masterpiece of art at the Vatican, do not check the narrative of your guide, but search, in the mean while, at the foot of the altar, for a tombstone, which you will readily know by a cross and the single word, — *Orate.* Beneath this slab was interred Beatrice Cenci.

She was the daughter of Francesco Cenci, and, according to the doctrine that, for good or evil, men reflect the spirit of their age, he was then the incarnation of its worst features. This will be readily seen in a rapid glance over the history of the time.

Upon the death of Innocent VIII., August 11, 1492, Alexander VI. ascended the throne of the pontiffs; who, as Cardinal Rodrigo Lenzuoli Borgia, had five children born to him by Rosa Vanozza. These were: Francesco, Duke of Gandia; Cesare, Duc de Valentinois; Lucrezia, who was married four times: Giofré, Count de Squillace; and another, of whom very little is known. The most eminent of these was Cesare, whose scheme of making himself the King of Italy must have been inevitably successful but for one unforeseen contingency, — the sudden death of his father and his own dangerous illness, the result of taking the poisoned wine the Pope had prepared for Cardinal Adrian, whose wealth he coveted.

Pius III. reigned twenty-five days; upon the twenty-sixth he was poisoned. Cesare Borgia could command the votes of the eighteen Spanish cardinals in the Sacred College; these he sold to Giuliano della Rovere, who was elected Pope, under the title of Julius II. To the Rome of Nero succeeded the Athens of Pericles. Leo

X. was the successor of Julius II.; and Christianity then evinced a paganism which, passing from works of art to the manners of social life, became the peculiar characteristic of the period. Crime suddenly disappears to make way for vices, yet vices of good taste, such as those of Alcibiades and those of which Catullus sung. Leo X. died after a reign of eight years, during which Michael Angelo, Raffaelle, Leonardo da Vinci, Correggio, Titian, Andrea del Sarto, Giulio Romano, Ariosto, Guicciardini, and Machiavelli had flourished. Giulio de' Medici and Pompeio Colonna were candidates for the papacy upon his death. Equal alike in policy as in merit, neither could obtain the majority, and the conclave was prolonged, to the great dissatisfaction of the cardinals. At last the Cardinal de' Medici, more wearied than the others by the proceedings, proposed to elect, some say the son of a weaver, others of a brewer, of Utrecht, of whom no one had hitherto thought, then Governor of Spain during the absence of Charles V. His pleasantry was successful; Adrian was elected Pope. He was a genuine Flemming, ignorant of Italian, who, upon his arrival at Rome, when viewing the *chefs-d'œuvre* of antiquity, collected at such a vast expense by Leo X., was anxious to destroy them, asserting that they were the idols of the ancients. His first act as Pope was to send Francesco Chieregato to the Diet of Nuremberg, with these instructions, which serve to illustrate the manners of the times.

"Avow openly," said he, "that God has suffered this schism and persecution because of the sins of men,—more especially those of the priests and prelates of the Church, for we know that the Holy See has been stained by abominable crimes."

Adrian wished to restore the simple and austere faith

and practice of the primitive Church, and carried this spirit of reform even to the slightest details. Of the hundred grooms, for instance, maintained by Leo, he retained twelve only, in order, as he said, to have two more than the cardinals. Such a Pope could not reign for any length of time; he died, therefore, at the expiration of a year. The day after this event, the door of the house of his physician was decorated with garlands of flowers, with this inscription: "To the Liberator of his country."

Giulio de' Medici and Pompeio Colonna were again competitors for the pontificate. Intrigues recommenced, and opinions were so divided in the conclave that the cardinals again proposed to resort to the election of a third candidate; the name of Orsini even was mentioned, when Giulio de' Medici suggested the following ingenious expedient to relieve them from their embarrassment. He wanted but five votes; five of his partisans offered to bet with five of their opponents a sum of one hundred thousand ducats that Giulio de' Medici would not be elected. Upon the scrutiny which immediately took place, Giulio was elected; but nothing could be said. The five cardinals who had voted in his favour had not sold themselves; they had wagered, that was all. In consequence, the 18th of November, 1523, Giulio de' Medici was proclaimed Pope, as Clement VII., and generously paid the same day the hundred thousand ducats which his partisans had lost.

It was in his pontificate, and during the seven months when Rome was held by the Lutheran soldiers, under the Connétable de Bourbon, that Francesco Cenci was born. He was the son of Nicolas Cenci, apostolic treasurer under Pius V. As this venerable prelate had devoted himself to the spiritual rather than the temporal government of his kingdom, Nicolas Cenci had profited by this

circumstance to amass a sum nearly equivalent to two million five hundred thousand francs of our present money, which Francesco, his only son, inherited. His youth was passed during the reign of Popes whose attention had been so exclusively engaged by the Lutheran schism that they had no time to think of events of less importance. The result was that Francesco, naturally vicious, and possessor of an immense fortune, which enabled him to purchase impunity, abandoned himself without restraint to all the debaucheries of his corrupted imagination and passionate desires. Five times imprisoned for his infamous crimes, he had as often escaped punishment by the payment of nearly five million francs. It must be also remembered that Popes were much in want of money at this time. Under the pontificate of Gregory XIII., serious attention was drawn to the acts of Francesco. Under the Bolognese Buoncampagno, every crime was tolerated, provided always the assassin and the judges were well paid. Murder and rape were so common that justice was not cognisant of such trifles if no one appeared to prosecute the crime. So the piety of Gregory XIII. was rewarded, and he had the joy of witnessing the day of St. Bartholomew.

Francesco was then about forty-four or forty-five years of age, five feet four inches high, very strong, and extremely well proportioned, although rather thin; his hair was grayish, his eyes large and expressive, although overhung too much by the upper eyelid; his nose long, lips thin, wearing generally an agreeable smile, which was changed into an indication of deadly hatred in the presence of an enemy; then, however slightly he might be excited, he was seized by a nervous trembling, which prolonged itself in a species of shivering fit long after the cause of the irritation had passed away; adroit in

all manly exercises; an excellent horseman, he rode at times without resting from Rome to Naples, forty-one leagues distant from each other; journeying without fear of the brigands, though oftentimes alone, and with no other arms than a sword and a poniard. If his horse fell from fatigue, he bought another; if the purchase was refused, he seized it; if resistance were made, he struck, and that always with the point, never with the handle of his weapon. Moreover, since he was well known throughout the papal States, and his generosity was admitted, no one opposed his wish; some yielded through fear, others through interest. Impious, sacrilegious, and an atheist, he never entered a church, or, if he did, it was to blaspheme, and not to pray. He had married an heiress, whose name is unknown, and who left him seven children, five boys and two girls. His second wife was Lucrezia Petroni, who, excepting the brilliant fairness of her complexion, was the perfect type of Roman beauty. As if every feeling of human nature was denied him, he hated his own offspring, — a feeling which he hardly strove to conceal; and it is related of him that, when building a church in the court of his splendid palace, dedicated to St. Thomas, near the Tiber, he designed a catacomb, saying, "It is here I hope to bury them all."

When Francesco's eldest sons, Giacomo, Christofero, and Rocco, were little more than boys, he sent them to the University of Salamanca, thinking doubtless to be in this manner freed from them at once, for he abandoned them entirely, not even supplying them with the means of existence; so that after a few months' struggle with every kind of privation and hardship, they were forced to return, begging their way barefooted from Spain to Italy. This occurred during the reign of Clement VIII.; the three youths therefore resolved to petition his Holi-

ness to obtain some slight annuity from the immense revenues of their father. They went to Frascati, where the Pope was then erecting the beautiful Aldobrandini villa, and stated their case. Clement kindly considered it, and directed Francesco to allow to each of them an annuity of two thousand crowns. Francesco sought to evade it by every means in his power, but in vain; the order was too peremptory to be neglected. Soon after, he was for the third time imprisoned for his odious crimes; his sons again petitioned, praying for condign punishment upon their parent, who had thus disgraced their name. But the Pope considered this proceeding odious and unnatural, and angrily refused its consideration. Francesco purchased his liberation at the price of one hundred thousand crowns.

It may be supposed that this proceeding of the sons only the more excited the hatred of their father, but as they were withdrawn from his rage, by reason of their independent annuity, it fell with the greater severity upon his two daughters. This soon became so intolerable that the elder contrived to forward a petition to the Pope, relating the treatment to which she was subjected, and beseeching his Holiness either to procure her marriage or to place her in a convent. Clement obliged Francesco to give her a dowry of sixty thousand crowns, and married her to Carlo Gabrielli, of a noble family of Gubbio.

At the same time death relieved Francesco of two sons, Rocco and Christofero; who were killed within an interval of twelve months, — the one by an ignorant surgeon whose name is unknown, and the other by Paolo Corsi de Massa, whilst he was attending Mass. But his hatred and avarice pursued them even after their decease, for he refused to pay for the expenses of their interment.

Portrait of Beatrice Cenci.

Photo-Etching. — From the Guido Portrait in the Barberini Gallery.

ere she knew in what sin consisted. In this manner she lived three years. At the expiration of this time, Francesco was obliged to travel, whereupon Lucrezia Petroni, his wife, and Beatrice addressed a memorial to the Pope, detailing the outrages to which they were subject, and from which there was no escape. But prior to his departure Francesco had taken his precaution; all those who surrounded the Pope were sold, or hoped to be purchased. The petition therefore never reached his Holiness; and the two unfortunate women, remembering the anger of Clement against Christofero and Rocco, believed themselves as included in the same proscription, and entirely abandoned to their fate. Giacomo, the eldest son, profiting by the absence of his father, now came to visit them, accompanied by an abbé of his acquaintance named Guerra.

The latter was a youth about twenty-five years of age, a descendant of one of the noblest families of Rome, of a bold, resolute, and courageous character, whose handsome features were the theme and universal praise of female society; these were truly Roman. His eyes were blue, and of a mild, lustrous expression; long auburn hair, beard and eyebrows of a chestnut colour, an extensive education, eloquence natural and impressive, united to a voice susceptible of the most varied tones, — all these combined may give the reader some idea of the Abbé Guerra. He loved Beatrice at first sight, — a feeling which she was not slow to return. The Council of Trent had not yet been held; ecclesiastics consequently were not interdicted from marriage; and it was agreed upon that, on the return of Francesco, the abbé should demand the hand of Beatrice from her father.

After an interval of three months, during which they were completely ignorant where he was, Francesco re-

turned, and immediately sought to make his daughter the companion of his crimes. Beatrice, however, was changed: she knew now the nature of his proposals; she was strengthened by the force of her affection for the abbé; prayers, threats, and violence were in vain. The rage of Francesco was now vented upon his wife, whom he accused of betraying him, and he violently struck her. Lucrezia was a true she-wolf of the Roman breed, — impassioned in love, vehement in revenge; she endured all, and forgave nothing.

After a few days' interval, Guerra arrived: young, rich, handsome, and of noble extraction, he had every reason to hope success, yet he was brutally dismissed by Francesco. Thrice he reattempted to obtain his consent, but in vain, till finally Francesco, impatient at the lover's zeal, exclaimed,—

"There is a reason why Beatrice should not marry."

Guerra required its explanation.

"It is," replied her father, "because she is my mistress."

Guerra was thrilled with horror at this reply, of which at first he doubted the veracity. For three days he vainly sought an interview with Beatrice; at last he succeeded. His last hope was a denial of the shameless crime from her own lips; Beatrice avowed all.

Hope henceforth fled from the lovers: they were for ever separated by an insurmountable abyss; yet no criminal design was yet awakened in the minds of either the wife or the daughter. Silence and darkness might have concealed his guilt, had not Francesco gained by violence what by no other means he could obtain. From that hour the cup of endurance was full; Francesco's fate was sealed. The mind of Beatrice was of that facile character which is susceptible of the best and worst impres-

sions: she could ascend toward the highest excellence, and sink into the lowest guilt. She told Lucrezia of this new outrage, which recalled the memory of her past wrongs: and both, increasing the hatred and revenge of each other, decided upon Francesco's death.

Guerra was now summoned to this council of death; his heart was replete with hatred, and thirsting for revenge. He sought out Giacomo Cenci, without whom, as the eldest son, the women were unwilling to act. Giacomo entered with great readiness into the conspiracy, since he was utterly disgusted with his father, who ill-treated him, and refused to allow him a sufficient support for his wife and children.

The apartments of M. Guerra were the place in which the details of the crime about to be committed were concerted and determined upon. Giacomo found a *sbirro* named Marzio; to whom Guerra added another, Olympio, to carry these details into execution. Both these men had, moreover, inducements to commit the crime: one was urged by love, the other by hatred. Marzio, in the service of her brother, had frequently seen Beatrice, and became enamoured of her, but with that deep, silent, hopeless, and corroding passion which wastes the heart; the crime which he thought could recommend him to Beatrice, was undertaken without reserve. As for Olympio, he hated Francesco, because it was through his agency that he had lost the situation of castellan of Rocca Petrella, — a castellated fortress situated in the kingdom of Naples, and belonging to the Prince Colonna.

Between these men and the family of the Cenci the following plan was adopted. The period when Francesco usually went to Rocca Petrella was nigh at hand; it was arranged, therefore, that Olympio should obtain

the assistance of some Neapolitan bandits, who were to be in waiting in a forest upon his route, and, informed of the moment of his approach, should carry him off with all his family. A heavy ransom should be next demanded, to obtain which the sons should be sent to Rome, but they, pretending not to be able to procure it, should allow the interval fixed upon by the bandits to pass unnoticed, upon which Francesco should be put to death.

In this manner they trusted to avoid all suspicion of conspiracy, and to screen the real assassins. Well arranged, however, as it might be, the scheme failed. When Francesco departed, the spy sent by the confederates could not discover the retreat of the brigands, and these not being warned, came too late to the place appointed. Francesco entered Rocca Petrella, and the brigands, unwilling to remain longer in a place where they had already spent a week, departed upon a less doubtful and fruitless expedition. In the mean while, the more freely to tyrannize over Lucrezia and Beatrice, Francesco dismissed Giacomo and the others to Rome. He then renewed his infamous attempts, until Beatrice resolved herself to accomplish the design she had sought to transfer to other hands.

Olympio and Marzio, having nothing to fear, still lurked in the neighbourhood. One day Beatrice perceived them accidentally from her window, and immediately made a sign that she wished to communicate with them. The same evening Olympio, who, from having been its castellan, knew all the outlets of the fortress, obtained an interview with her, in company with Marzio, at which she gave them letters for the Abbé Guerra and her brother. In these she again asked the approbation of Giacomo, and the payment by the abbé of one thou-

sand piastres to Olympio, being half of the covenanted sum: for, as to Marzio, he acted but for love of Beatrice, to whom he remained devoted as to a madonna: observing this, she presented him with a handsome scarlet mantle, bordered with gold lace, bidding him to wear it for her sake. The remainder of the reward was to be paid when the death of Francesco had made Lucrezia and Beatrice the possessors of his fortune.

The *sbirri* departed, and returned upon the appointed day with the money and the approbation of the priest and Giacomo. The eighth day of September was fixed upon for the deed: but Lucrezia, remembering that it was the Nativity of the Virgin, desired, with the consent of her daughter in-law, that it should be deferred until the following day.

On that evening, during supper, September 9, 1598, the women dexterously contrived to mix opium with Francesco's wine. Francesco did not detect it; and soon, therefore, fell into a deep sleep. Marzio and Olympio had been in the mean time concealed in the fortress, and, toward midnight, Beatrice conducted them to the chamber of her father, the door of which she herself opened. They entered, whilst the women awaited the event in the room adjoining. In a few minutes they returned, pale and nerveless, and, by their silence, Beatrice readily perceived the crime was unaccomplished.

"What means this?" she exclaimed. "What is it that prevents you?"

"We feel," replied they, "that it is a base act to slay a poor sleeping old man. Reflecting upon his age, pity overcame us."

She raised her head disdainfully, and, with a deep firm voice, thus indignantly reproached their irresolution:

"And is it thus that men who boast of bravery and strength of mind shrink, and have not the courage to slay a sleeping old man? How would you then dare the deed were he awake? And thus you steal the price of blood! Go, then; and since your cowardice nerves my hand, I myself will kill my father; as for you, your lives shall not be long secure."

Upon this the *sbirri*, ashamed of their weakness, made a sign that they would despatch him, and re-entered the room, accompanied by the two women. One of them carried two great nails, the other a hammer; he who held the first placed it vertically upon the eye of the sleeping man; the other struck, and the nail was buried in his head. In a similar manner another was driven into his throat; and thus his soul, stained with crimes from which humanity recoils, escaped from his body, which writhed in torture on the floor. His daughter, upon this, placed in the hands of his murderers the promised reward, and they departed.

Lucrezia and Beatrice now drew the nails from the body, and, wrapping it up in a sheet, they dragged it through the rooms toward a little terrace, from which they intended to throw it into some waste ground. But their strength was unequal to the task, and Lucrezia, perceiving the two *sbirri*, who were dividing the spoil, recalled them, whereupon they returned and carried the body to the terrace, and threw it down upon an elder-tree in the branches of which it hung. It was found on the following morning still lying amidst the broken branches, and, as Beatrice had expected, the general opinion attributed his death to a fall from a part of the terrace whither he had gone in the night, and where there was no parapet. The consequence was that, owing to the distigured state of the body, no attention was paid to the wounds made by the nails.

Lucrezia and Beatrice, upon hearing of the accident, immediately quitted their rooms, crying and bewailing the event, with a semblance of grief so natural and unaffected that it would effectually have dissipated the most careless suspicion as to its cause. Nor did any, the slightest even, seem to be awakened, except in the mind of the washerwoman of the castle, to whom Beatrice, in giving her the sheet in which they had dragged the body, assigned a frivolous excuse for the blood with which it was stained. She believed it, at least appeared to do so, and was silent upon the subject at the time: and, the funeral over, Lucrezia and Beatrice returned without delay to Rome.

Whilst they resided here, fearless of inquiry, but probably not free from remorse, retribution had commenced its course. The court of Naples had heard of the sudden and unexpected death of Francesco, and, being doubtful as to its cause, despatched a royal commissioner to Petrella, to disinter the body, and trace (if any existed) the marks of assassination. Upon his arrival all the domestics of the castle were arrested and sent in chains to Naples. But no evidence beyond that of the washerwoman was obtained; who deposed that Beatrice had given her a sheet to wash which was stained with blood. But this was a fearful clue; for, being questioned as to whether she really thought this was sufficiently accounted for by the cause Beatrice had assigned, she replied no, and gave reasons for such an opinion.

This deposition was sent to the court of Rome, where it was not considered as sufficient to justify the arrest of the Cenci. Time passed away, and the youngest of the family died, so that of the five sons of Francesco, Giacomo and Bernardo alone remained. In the mean time

the Abbé Guerra received information that orders had been given to arrest both Marzio and Olympio. He was a man of the most wary and circumspect disposition, whom it was difficult to surprise when once put upon his guard. He obtained the aid of two more *sbirri*, who engaged to assassinate the former; Olympio was thereupon killed at Terni, but Marzio was already arrested by the court of Naples. He was tortured and confessed all. His deposition was forwarded to Rome, whither he was soon afterward sent, to be confronted with the accused.

Giacomo, Bernardo, Lucrezia, and Beatrice were now arrested, and confined at first in Francesco's palace, but as proof arose against them, they were transferred to the castle of Corte Savella, where they were examined in the presence of Marzio; but they denied not only any participation in the crime, but all knowledge of the assassin. Beatrice in particular demanded to be first confronted with the witness, and then denounced with so much calmness and dignity the falsehood of his evidence that he, feeling her to be more dear to him than ever, resolved, if he could not live for her, at least to save her by his death. He thereupon recanted, asserted that what he had before stated was untrue, for which he besought pardon of God and Beatrice. Neither threats nor tortures were henceforth available; and he died resolute in his denial, under the most frightful tortures.

The Cenci believed themselves saved; but justice still pursued them. The *sbirro* who had assassinated his coadjutors was arrested for another crime, and amidst his general confession of guilt, included that of having executed the commands of Signor Guerra, on account of some anxiety caused by the existence of Olympio. Fortunately for the abbé, he received prompt intimation of the evidence given against him, and instead of allow-

ing himself to be intimidated or disconcerted as another might have done, he availed himself of the accidental presence of a charcoal-dealer, who was supplying his house at the moment he received the news; and bribing him first to the strictest silence, and, secondly, purchasing his dirty garments at almost their weight in gold, he next cut off his hair, stained his beard, smeared his face, bought two asses laden with charcoal, and in this manner passed through the streets, with his mouth full of black bread and onions, imitating at times the cry and manner of the dealers. And thus whilst the police sought for him in every direction, he escaped from the city, joined a troop of *condottieri*, and reached Naples, whence he embarked, and, according to some doubtful opinions, enlisted and served in a Swiss company, in the pay of Henri IV. of France.

The confession of the *sbirro* and the flight of Guerra left no further doubt as to the guilt of the Cenci; they were therefore taken to prison. The two brothers were submitted to the torture, and, unable to endure its pains, at once acknowledged their guilt; and Lucrezia Petroni was not able to resist the torture of the cord, and in a similar manner avowed all she knew. Beatrice was alone unmoved; neither promise, nor menace, nor torture, was of any use; she bore all with indomitable courage, - insomuch that, celebrated as the judge Ulysseo Moscati was in the conduct of such affairs, he was foiled, and unable to wring one word from her to which she was unwilling to give utterance. He referred the case again to Clement VIII., who, fearing that, affected by her beauty, Moscati had spared the torture, withdrew the cause from him and placed it in the hands of another, whose inflexible sternness and indifference to human suffering was well known. He recommenced the

proceedings, and, being informed that Beatrice had been submitted to the ordinary torture only, desired her to be subjected to its extraordinary application, — that of the cord and pulley, the most fearful of all those the hellish ingenuity of man has ever invented.

There were at this period four kinds of torture in use at Rome, — that of the whistle, fire, total deprivation of sleep, and the cord and pulleys. The first, applied in general to children and the aged, consisted in thrusting beneath the quick of the nail reeds cut in the shape of whistles; the second, in exposing the feet to a great fire, the soles being first well greased with lard, until they were actually fried.

The torture of deprivation of sleep was invented by Marsilius, and consisted in making the sufferer sit in a frame of wood about five feet high, and angular. He was naked, with his arms bound to the machine behind him; two men were seated by his side, who were relieved every fifth hour, and awoke him the moment they observed the slightest desire to sleep. Marsilius has asserted that no one was ever known to endure this torture, but Marsilius is too boastful. Farinacci admits that out of a hundred who endured it, five only persisted either in denial or in refusal to confess, — an admission sufficiently flattering to the genius of its inventor.

The torture by cord and pulley admitted of three degrees of intensity. The first was merely the fear excited by its horrible preparation, and the slight compression of the wrists. The second degree was when the victim was undressed, his wrists tightly bound behind his back, from whence the rope was passed around a pulley in the vaulted roof, and thence fixed to a windlass, by means of which the body suspended could be raised or lowered at will, — gradually, or by a sudden

jerk, as the judge deemed fit. This lasted generally during the recitation of a "Pater Noster," an "Ave Maria," or "Miserere," but if ineffectual, the time was greatly extended. The last degree was conducted as the preceding, only that after suspension for different intervals of time, varying from a quarter to three quarters of an hour, in Spain to an hour and a quarter, the prisoner was either moved to and fro, like the pendulum of a clock, or suffered to fall from the full elevation of the rope to within two feet of the floor. If he resisted this, which was almost unheard of, his feet were manacled, and to these also weights were attached, by which means the inexpressible pain of the torture was doubled.

As, after her re-examination, Beatrice, notwithstanding the avowals of her brothers and step-mother, still persisted in her denial, she was raised in the manner described about two feet from the floor by the pulley, and thus kept during the time occupied by the recital of a "Pater Noster." Being again questioned, she made no answer, except, "You kill me! you kill me!" whereupon she was raised still higher, and they recited the "Ave Maria" until she fainted. Upon recovery the rope was turned again, and the "Miserere" was now said; during which she gave utterance only to exclamations of pain. She was now elevated to the height of ten feet from the ground, and the judge again questioned her; but whether she was speechless or unwilling to confess, she made a sign only with her head, either that she could not or would not speak.

"Perceiving this," continues the official detail, "we made a sign to the executioner to loose the rope, so that she fell by a sudden jerk, with the full weight of her body, from an elevation of ten to two feet, by the force of which her arms were wrenched quite round, where-

upon she uttered a loud cry, and swooned. She was again restored and exclaimed, 'Infamous assassins, you slay me; but if you even tear my arms from my body, I will make no other answer.' Wherefore we ordered her feet to be manacled, and a weight of fifty pounds to be attached to them. But at this moment the door was opened, and several voices cried, 'Enough, enough; oh! do not torture her again.' This proceeded from Giacomo, Bernardo, and Lucrezia Petroni, who, seeing Beatrice suspended, her arms dislocated, and covered with the blood which flowed from her wrists, advanced into the torture-chamber and said:—

"'We are guilty, and now penitence can alone save our souls, or enable us with courage to endure death; do not suffer them thus cruelly to torture you, by an obstinate refusal to confess.'

"To which she answered, 'Do you seek death, then; you are wrong to do so; but if you wish to die, so let it be.' Then, turning to the executioner, 'Untie me,' she added, 'and read to me the questions you would put. That which I ought to confess I will confess, and that which I ought to deny, I will deny.'"

Beatrice was thereupon unbound, the barber dressed her arms in the ordinary manner, and, as she had promised, she made a full confession.

The Pope was so excited upon reading the details of the crime that he commanded the culprits to be drawn by wild horses through the streets of Rome. But a sentence so terrible awakened opposition from its revolting nature; so that many of the highest rank proceeded to the Vatican, and besought his Holiness to revoke the decree, or at least to permit the condemned to be heard in their defence.

"And they," replied Clement VIII., "did they afford

their unhappy father an opportunity to make his, when they mercilessly and disgracefully slew him?"

At last, influenced by their solicitations, he granted them a respite of three days. The best and greatest of the advocates at Rome immediately availed themselves of the delay, and numerous memorials were drawn up, to support which they appeared before the Pope upon the day appointed. The first who spoke was Nicolas de Angelis, and he spoke with so much eloquence that the Pope, afraid of its effect, interrupted his discourse, angrily exclaiming,—

"What, not only among the nobility men are found willing to commit parricide, but among the advocates eloquence to defend the crime! This we never should have believed; this it was impossible for us to have conceived."

All were silent upon this except the advocate Farinacci, who, emboldened by the office that he held, firmly but respectfully replied:—

"We do not appear before you, most holy father, to defend the guilty, but to plead the cause of the innocent, for should we prove that some of the accused have acted from the right of self-defence, we trust they may deserve your mercy; for even as there are admitted cases in which the father may put his child to death, so also there are others in which the child is justified even unto the slaying his father; we will speak therefore upon this point, when your Holiness will deign to hear us."

Clement VIII. was now as calm as he before had been excited, and he listened to his pleading with great attention, the principal argument of which rested upon the crime of Francesco, and the violence offered to his daughter. He cited as a proof of this the memoir forwarded by Beatrice to his Holiness, in which she be-

sought him, as her sister had before done, to withdraw her from her father's house, and place her in a convent; this had, however, unfortunately disappeared, and, notwithstanding the strictest search, no trace could be found of its receipt.

The Pope, taking all the papers connected with the subject, dismissed the advocates, who immediately retired, excepting Altieri, who threw himself at his feet, and said: —

"I could not do otherwise than appear before you, most holy father, in this case, being the advocate of the poor, for which I humbly entreat your forgiveness."

The Pope upon this raised him with kindness, and said: —

"We are not surprised at the part that you, but at that which others have taken, who protect and defend these criminals."

And as he felt a great interest in the cause, he spent the whole night in studying it, with the Cardinal di San Marcello, a man of great experience and ability. This done, he communicated his view of the general argument to the advocates, who derived from it strong hopes of the final pardon of the accused; for it was clearly proved that if the children were guilty of parricide, at least, and this more particularly in the case of Beatrice, they had been urged to its commission by the brutal lust, the tyranny, and cruelty of their father. The Pope seemed to feel the influence of the arguments adduced; he relaxed the proceedings against the Cenci, and permitted them to hope for life. Rome breathed more freely, and seemed joyous as though this act of clemency was a public good; but, alas! the intentions of the Pope were changed by the news of the murder of the Marquis of Santa-Croce, at the age of sixty years, by the hands of

his son Paul, who had cruelly killed him by fifteen strokes of his dagger, because he refused to make him the sole heir to his estates.

Clement VIII. was horror-struck at this repetition of a crime so dreadful, but he was obliged to proceed to Monte Cavallo, where, upon the following morning, he was to consecrate the Cardinal Diveristiana, appointed by him the titular Bishop of Olumbre, in the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli; but upon the 10th of September, 1599, at eight o'clock in the morning, he summoned before him M. Ferrante Taverna, governor of Rome, and said to him: —

"I give into your hands the Cenci cause, that you may, as soon as you can, execute the justice allotted to them."

As soon as the governor arrived at his palace, he communicated the sentence, and held a council with all the criminal judges of the city, at which the Cenci were condemned to death. His decision was soon known; and as the interest felt in this unhappy family had continually increased, many cardinals earnestly supplicated that they, or at least Lucrezia and Beatrice, might be privately executed, and mercy extended to Bernardo, then only fifteen years of age, and who was guiltless of the slightest participation in the crime. Cardinal Sforza, who was the most urgent, solicited only in vain; the Pope would not encourage the slightest hope of mitigation: nor was it until Farinacci suggested a scruple of conscience, and at the last hour, that, upon repeated entreaty, he consented to remit the sentence in behalf of Bernardo.

At break of day the members of the brotherhood of the Conforteria assembled at the two prisons of Corte Savella and of Tordinona; but it was not until five o'clock that the registrar of the courts of justice read

their sentence to Beatrice and Lucrezia Petroni. Both slept in the hope of the enjoyment of life; the registrar awoke them to notify them that, condemned by man, they must now prepare to meet their God. Beatrice seemed at first to be completely paralysed: she could not speak, was regardless of all around, and, pale and trembling, arose from her bed as one deprived of sense and all power of self-guidance, till at last her grief burst forth in frightful cries.

Lucrezia received the intelligence with greater firmness, and dressed herself to proceed immediately to the chapel, exhorting, in the mean while, Beatrice to endure her fate with resignation; but she, as if deprived of reason, ran wildly about her prison, raising her arms in agony toward heaven, or striking in despair her head against the walls, exclaiming,—

"To die! to die thus, unprepared, upon a scaffold — by the hangman!"

After a terrible paroxysm, her physical strength becoming exhausted, her mind regained its force, and from that moment she was an example of humility and of patient, enduring resolution. She desired permission to make her will, requested that her body might be interred in the church of San Pietro in Montorio, left five hundred crowns to the religious order of the Stigmata, and willed that her dowry, now amounting to fifteen thousand crowns, might be bestowed in marriage on fifty poor girls. For the place of her interment, she selected the foot of the high altar, adorned by Raffaelle's picture of the Transfiguration, which had been so great an object of interest to her in life. Lucrezia followed her example, bequeathed many charitable legacies, and left her body to be buried in the church of San Georgio del Velobre upon the Celian hill, with thirty-two thousand

crowns for charitable uses and other pious legacies. This done, they passed some time reciting psalms and litanies, and other prayers.

At eight o'clock they confessed, heard Mass, and received the holy communion. Beatrice, not considering that it would be decorous to appear on the scaffold in their splendid dresses, ordered two, one for herself and another for the Signora Lucrezia, made in the manner of the nuns, gathered up at the neck, with long sleeves of black cotton for her mother-in-law, and of common silk for herself. She had also a little turban as her head-dress. These were brought to them, with cords for their girdles, and were placed by them whilst they continued in prayer.

The moment appointed now drew nigh, and Beatrice, who was still kneeling, rose with a countenance calm, and almost happy, and, turning to Lucrezia, said: —

"Mother, the hour of our suffering is drawing near; I think it is now time for us to prepare for it; let us dress, therefore, in these clothes, and let us aid each other in this last office, as we have been accustomed to do."

They did so; the ropes were tied around their waists as girdles, and Beatrice, placing her turban upon her head, awaited the last summons.

In the mean time, their sentence had been also read to Giacomo and Bernardo, who were now similarly awaiting their doom.

Toward ten o'clock the Company of Mercy arrived at the prison del Tordinona, and stopped upon the threshold with the sacred crucifix, expecting the approach of the unhappy youths. Here a dangerous accident had nearly happened. As many spectators were at the windows of the prison to see the prisoners led forth, some one inadvertently threw down a flower-pot which was outside one

of them, which fell into the street, and narrowly missed one of the brothers of the order, who walked before the crucifix with a lighted torch, the flame of which it passed so near that it extinguished it by the force of its descent. The doors opened; Giacomo appeared, and knelt immediately in devout adoration of the holy symbol of salvation. He was dressed in a long mantle of black, with his breast entirely bare; for during the procession to the scaffold, his flesh was to be torn by red-hot pincers, which the executioner had in a chafing-dish, fixed upon the cart. Bernardo was now led forth, but at the moment he crossed the threshold of the prison, the fiscal of Rome addressed him in a loud voice: —

"Signor Bernardo Cenci, in the name of our Redeemer, our holy father the Pope extends unto you the mercy of life, — satisfied with commanding you to accompany your relatives to the scaffold and to death, and enjoining you not to forget to pray for those with whom you were to die."

The executioner now took off his handcuffs and the bandage from his eyes; for, owing to his extreme youth, they thought to spare him the sight of the scaffold, and placed him in the cart beside his brother, wrapping around him at the same time a magnificent cloak, which, upon inquiry, was found to be the same given by Beatrice to Marzio, to decide him upon the murder of her father.

The procession now advanced to the prison of Corte Savella, upon reaching which, the sacred crucifix was similarly stopped to await the approach of the female prisoners. They were immediately led forth, and, kneeling upon the threshold, worshipped, as their brothers had done, the holy sign of their common faith. Beatrice and Lucrezia advanced on foot one behind the other, after the last row of the penitents, both having their

heads covered to their waists, with this difference, that Lucrezia, as a widow, wore a black veil, which covered her as far as her girdle, slippers of the same colour, with high heels, and bows of ribbons, as was then the custom; whilst Beatrice wore a cap of silk similar to the *soubreverte*, or upper garment without sleeves, with a veil embroidered in silver, which fell upon the shoulders, and covered her satin gown, white slippers with high heels, decorated with knots of ribbons, and cherry-coloured fringe. The hands of both were but slightly tied, so that each could carry a crucifix and a handkerchief. It was thus they advanced toward the bridge of San Angelo, where the scaffold had been erected. Lucrezia wept bitterly; but Beatrice was calm, resigned, and firm. Upon reaching the bridge, they were, together with their brothers, brought into a chapel adjoining, where for a few moments they were reunited.

Giacomo and Bernardo were then led forth, although Bernardo was pardoned, and the other was not to be executed until the last. Upon reaching the platform, Bernardo fainted for the second time; and, as the executioner went toward him to assist in his recovery, some of the spectators, who feared it was to put him to death, called out, "He is pardoned!" The hangman, however, reassured them by placing Bernardo near the block, whilst Giacomo knelt upon the other side. Lucrezia, the first to suffer, was conducted by the executioner to the foot of the scaffold; her hands were then tied behind, her breast and neck uncovered, and upon reaching the platform, the veil was taken from her face. The shame of being thus exposed to the gaze of the crowd overcame her, and she shuddered in a manner that thrilled the hearts of the spectators; then, in tears, and with a voice excited by despair, she exclaimed: —

"Oh! my God, have mercy upon me! and do you, my brothers, here seated, pray in pity for my soul."

She now turned to the executioner and inquired what remained for her to do; whereupon he placed her upon the plank of the guillotine, and, adjusting her head with much difficulty to the block, owing to her stoutness, the spring was touched, the knife descended, and the head rolled upon the scaffold, to the great horror of the multitude to whom the executioner showed it: then, wrapping it up in black silk, he placed it with the body in a coffin at the foot of the scaffold. Whilst the scaffold was being arranged for Beatrice, some steps covered with spectators broke down, and many were killed, and more lamed and hurt by this accident.

The machine was now rearranged, the blood washed off, and the executioner returned to the chapel to fetch Beatrice. Upon seeing him approach with the cords to tie her hands, she exclaimed, "God grant that you bind this body unto corruption, but free my spirit unto eternal life." She then arose and quitted the chapel, leaving her slippers at the foot of the scaffold, quickly ascended the ladder, and as she had already been instructed what to do, she stretched herself upon the plank, adjusting her head as quickly as possible upon the block. But notwithstanding the care she had taken to avoid the agony of delay, she was obliged to endure it; for, aware of her impetuous character, and fearful that it might betray her into some act of guilt between the interval even of absolution and death, the Pope had ordered that upon Beatrice's appearance upon the scaffold, a cannon should be fired, which was done to the great wonder of the people and of the culprit, who raised her head from the block, until Clement, who was in prayer at Monte Cavallo, gave her plenary absolution

in articulo mortis. Then after an interval of five minutes, during which she awaited the stroke with her head upon the block, the executioner touched the spring, and the knife fell.

Thereupon a terrible sight ensued, for whilst the head rolled on one side, the body rose up upon the other, falling forward again with violence upon the guillotine. The executioner next held up the head to the crowd, and then gave the body to the brotherhood of mercy, one of whom attempting to place it in the coffin, it slipped from his hands, and fell from the platform, shedding a great deal of blood to the ground, upon which Bernardo fainted, and was recovered with the greatest difficulty to endure the execution of his eldest brother.

Giacomo was now to die; he had witnessed the death of his step-mother and of his sister, his clothes were covered with their blood, when the hangman approached him, and, throwing aside his mantle, exhibited his breast, streaming with blood from the wounds inflicted by the burning pincers. In this state he walked firmly toward his brother, whom he thus addressed: —

"Bernardo, if, during my examination, I accused and compromised you, it was basely done, and, although I have already abjured that declaration, yet here, at the moment of appearing before my Creator, I solemnly attest your innocence, and declare it to be an atrocious act of power which has condemned you to witness this most fearful sight."

Upon this the executioner made him kneel, bound his legs to a transverse beam upon the scaffold, bandaged his eyes, and then dashed out his brains with a blow from a leaden hammer, and immediately quartered him before the eyes of the people. The butchery over, the

crowd retired; and Bernardo, attacked by a burning fever, was bled and put to bed.

The bodies of Lucrezia and Beatrice were laid in their coffins and placed before the statue of St. Paul, at the foot of the bridge, with four torches of white wax before them; in which state they remained until four o'clock in the afternoon, when they were carried to the church of San Giovanni Decollato. At nine in the evening, the body of Beatrice, decorated with flowers, and dressed in the clothes she had worn when executed, was borne to the church of San Pietro in Montorio, where, with fifty lighted torches, followed also by the brethren of the order of the Stigmata and all the Franciscans of Rome, it was buried at the foot of the high altar, according to her request. The same evening Lucrezia was buried in the church of San Georgio del Velobre. A few days afterward Bernardo Cenci was freed from confinement; but he was condemned to pay, in the course of the year, two thousand five hundred Roman crowns to the hospital of the Most Holy Trinity of Pilgrims.

And now, gentle reader, if, after you have seen the tomb, you desire to obtain a more accurate idea of the face and form of her who therein reposes, you should visit the Barberini Gallery, where, amid five other *chefs-d'œuvre*, you will see the portrait of Beatrice, painted by Guido, either the night preceding her death or during her procession to the scaffold. It is a beautiful head, ornamented by a turban, to which a rich velvet drapery is attached: the hair of glossy chestnut colour, dark eyes, within which the tear seems yet to tremble; a nose well formed, and mouth almost infantine; a complexion remarkably fair; the age apparently about twenty-two. Close by this hangs the portrait of Lucrezia, the very

type of the Roman matron, in all her pride of beauty; the rich complexion, well-defined features, straight nose, dark eyebrows, and expression at once commanding and tenderly voluptuous. A smile seems yet to linger on her lips: and her hair, parted in rich curls upon her forehead, and falling luxuriantly around her face, seems its natural and becoming frame. Of Giacomo and Bernardo no portraits exist. They are described, the former as of middle size, fair but ruddy, and with black eyebrows, affable in his nature, of good address, and well skilled in every science, and in all knightly exercises. He was not more than twenty-three when he died. Lastly, Bernardo so closely resembled Beatrice in complexion, features, and everything else that when he first appeared upon the scaffold, with his long hair and feminine figure, many at first thought that it was Beatrice; his age, at her death, has been stated at twenty-six years of age, but he appeared not more than fourteen. He remained in the prison of Tordinona for some time after the execution of his family, and, upon his release, became heir to all their possessions. He married, and had a son named Christofero.

Peace be with their remains!

END OF VOL. II.